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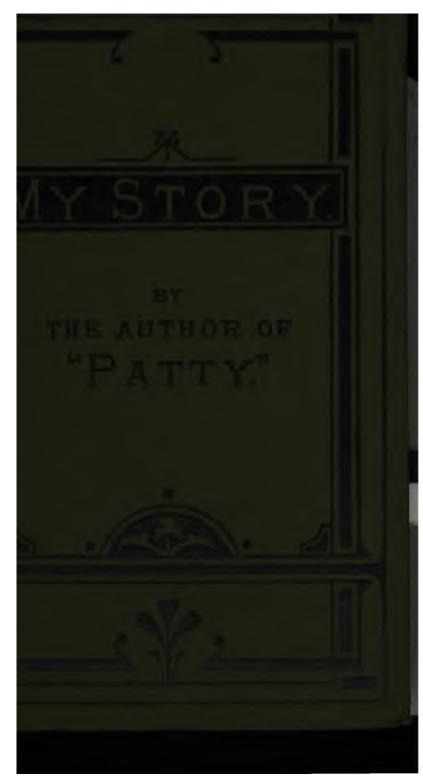
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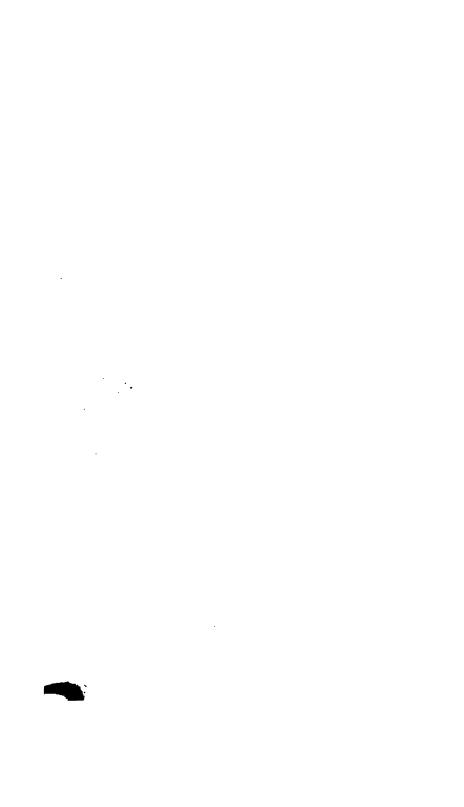






MY STORY.

VOL. I.



MY STORY.

. BY

KATHARINE S. MACQUOID,

AUTHOR OF

"PATTY," "THROUGH NORMANDY," &c., &c.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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To

WILLIAM BENFORD NELSON, Esq.

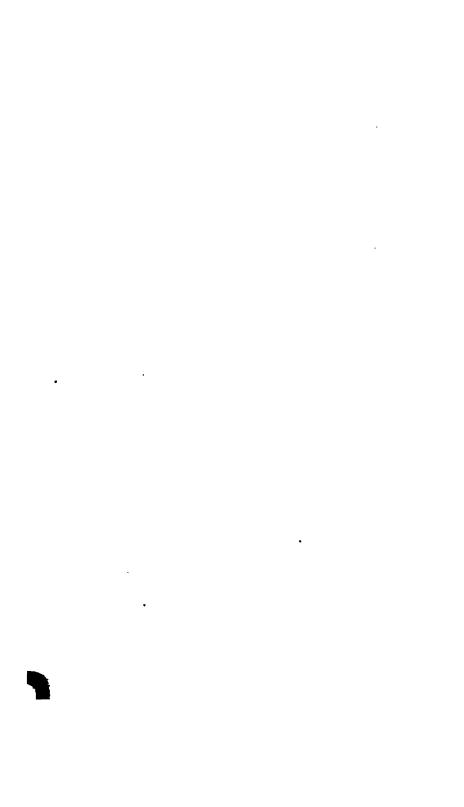
My dear Friend,

We owe so much to your friendship and sympathy, that I feel drawn to offer you a slight tribute of thanks, in a more lasting form than that of mere spoken words.

Yours affectionately and gratefully,

Katharine S. Macquoid.

Chelsea, November, 1874.



MY STORY.

GERTRUDE'S PREFACE.

HAVE been told that, if I put together all that I have from time to time written down about one part of my own life, it will be found interesting reading.

I can hardly believe this, and there is much recorded which I shrink from yielding to public notice, but Life has taught me that I am not the best judge in matters that affect me personally, and, therefore, I yield my opinion to one who has the right to judge for me; only I must tell my Story in my own way—sometimes brightly as it flashes out among much that is half-for-

gotten—sometimes slowly drawn from that which is so painfully burned into memory that it will read as if I had learnt it by heart before I set it down—sometimes by bits taken from the journal in which I used to set down that which happened to me, and also my foolish thoughts and hopes as they came.

I am not a well-read scholar. I have no power to reduce these fragments of a life into a smooth, well-digested narrative. I leave many of the incidents, as an artist leaves his sketches, dashed off at the moment. Sometimes I must tell things as they seem to happen under my eyes, when the past becomes even more actual than the present life I lead, and sometimes I must relate far off memories.

I have been bid tell my Story, and I will do the best I can, and begin at the point which decided my fate.

CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD THE "ADELAIDE."

THE gale was over, but the sea was still rough; I fancied my mother slept at last, and I turned down the lamp.

I had been watching all night and all day, and I felt tired out; but I could not bear to leave my mother, so I got up and leaned against the door of our little cabin. How still she lay after her long night of anguish, and how tall she looked in the dim light. I shuddered; her figure showing vaguely under the bedclothes reminded me of a recumbent marble effigy on a tomb. I, too, am tall, but my mother had the look we

fancy suited to a queen. She had that fair aquiline face which seems born to command. I am dark-eyed and dark-haired, and have a gipsy face rather than a royal one.

I stood leaning against the door till I was half asleep. Suddenly I started at the sound of a voice.

"Yes, I fear the worst, and I think some one ought to tell Miss Stewart."

The waves were still striking against the ship; but, through all the noise they made, the words came to me distinctly, and then this answer:

"Tell her yourself then, doctor, I can't do it."

The voices told me that Captain Brand and Doctor Maxse were standing just outside my mother's cabin. The door was shut fast; but there were wide cracks, and as I leaned against it I heard every word. I knew that my mother was dangerously ill, but these words added a sudden terror

to my anxiety. I knew at once what it was that Doctor Maxse feared and wished to tell me; but I would not believe him, it was not possible he could know.

I came out of the cabin, closed the door, and I went up to Doctor Maxse.

I turned my back on Captain Brand. Even then I was shy of him—even at the moment when it might have been thought I had only room for the one overmastering dread. I did not dislike Captain Brand, but I feared him—he was so big, so rough-looking, and so silent.

"Do you mean that my mother is dying, Doctor Maxse?"

There was not much light, but I could make out the look of surprise in the doctor's face. He was a small man, with a soft temper, and a fair downy beard—a man I felt at ease with, and yet a man in whom I felt no refuge, no support against the terror that threatened me. At the dumb wonder in Doctor Maxse's face a vehement

anger came to me. But before I had got out in words the passion that throbbed in my throat and quivered in my nostrils, Captain Brand's large hard hand had taken mine gently but firmly—he drew me round so as to face him. I looked up, and I was surprised. Captain Brand had always seemed so indifferent—I could almost say so harsh towards me. I had got the idea from his silence that he disapproved of my wild independent ways, and would have liked to treat me as a child. Now he looked quite changed, there was a tenderness in his blue eyes, as if the brightness was softened by tears.

"Can I do anything for her?"

His voice sounded hoarse and unsteady; for an instant I felt I could cling to him for help against this terrible grief, and then came the cold certainty, if this brave, steadfast man gave up hope, the words I had said in defiance, more than in reality, were the truth. My mother was dying—and

yet I had left the cabin in better hope, her breathing had seemed easier than it had been for some hours.

I could not answer—I must have stood still and silent some minutes, for Captain Brand moved towards the cabin-door before I recovered from the look he had given me.

"May I go in?" He said this, but he did not wait for my leave. I found myself following him to my mother's bedside.

She was awake, and her look rested kindly on him as he turned up the lamp. The bright light fell on her face, and then I saw the change there. Doctor Maxse had spoken the truth. There was no hope.

"O mother, mother!"—I was little more than sixteen—the words came out against my will—and then I threw myself on my knees, and hid my face on a chair close beside the bed.

When I looked up again, Captain Brand

was holding my mother's delicate wasted hand in his strong brown fingers.

I was full of anguish, and yet there was room in my heart for pride.

What a degradation for my mother, so well born and gently bred, the wife too of my fastidious, aristocratic father, in her dying moments to have no one for a friend and comforter, no one to hold her hand and give her sympathy but this rough captain of a merchant ship. He was good and kind, and now he seemed tender, but he was only an ordinary sailor for all that.

"What will become of my Gertrude?—alone—quite alone." Her voice was so very weak that I could hardly hear it. Could all this be real, was I awake, and was my mother talking of herself as gone from me?—actually talking about my future to a person like Captain Brand?

He leant over her as he answered-

"Do not distress yourself, Mrs. Stewart. I pledge myself to take every care of her. When we reach England I will take her to her friends myself."

I still knelt, looking at my mother; it seemed to me that this talk only exhausted her, and kept me from my place beside her. What was I? What could it matter what became of me, when she was going away for ever? If I had not feared to vex her I should have told Captain Brand to go.

I saw her shake her head in answer to him, but, oh, how feebly!

"Poor dear child,—she has not—any friend,"—she gasped between the words —"they have to be reconciled first—only I could do that."

Then came silence; I could not bear it, she might be dying now. I rose up, and moved softly to the side of Captain Brand.

"O my Gertrude, my darling, what will become of her, left alone, so young, so friendless,"—this came in a stronger, less broken voice; I stood still, frightened. I did not dare to speak.

Captain Brand turned suddenly from the bed, he began to walk up and down my mother's cabin as if he were on deck, his chin sunk on his chest, and his hands clasped behind him.

I longed so that he would go away. I could not hang over or kiss my mother with this great strange man close by; he seemed to freeze up all my feelings; what was the use of his staying when he could not comfort her? I cleared my throat with an effort to speak to him as if I were not afraid—"Will you go away now, please? I want to be alone with mamma."

He seemed not to have heard me.

"Will you go up and fetch Dr. Maxse?" He spoke very gently; and then an ashamed look came on his sun-burnt face. "I want to speak to Mrs. Stewart alone," he said, in his usual hard manner; and he opened the cabin-door.

This imperative way of his had always repelled me, and now I almost hated him.

How could he send me out of my mother's room when she might actually be dying? I tried to say I would not go, but I found no power in me to disobey Captain Brand.

I went to look for Doctor Maxse. He was sitting, half asleep, I thought, with our one fellow-passenger, an old clergyman-Mr. Howard. If I had been differently brought up, I might, perhaps, have looked to Mr. Howard for comfort; but at that time religion was to me a mere Sunday business, and Sunday was the dullest day of the week, and clergymen were a part of Sundays. I disliked them, and all that belonged to them; it would be time enough, I considered, to care about such things when I got middle-aged and grey-Therefore, when I found Mr. haired. Howard looking at me intently, I felt vexed.

"I am sent to fetch you to my mother, Doctor Maxse; are you asleep?" I spoke reprovingly, for he started and gaped as he got up to follow me.

"How unworthy he is to have sole charge of my mother! most likely the first real lady he has ever had for a patient."

Does it seem awful that such a petty thought should come into my head at such a time? I have said already that I can only tell my story just as it happened. I must give my thoughts and impulses as I find them written down, although I may often shrink from them as much as my readers do. I am more likely to paint myself better, not worse, than I was.

I led the way to the cabin, but when I tried the door it was locked. I stood waiting patiently, for I could hear my mother's faint, sweet voice. Every now and then Captain Brand answered; but his voice had a muffled sound, and he did not often speak. I drew away from the door. I was glad to see that Doctor Maxse was awake now, but I thought he also looked

inquisitive. I longed to tell him to move farther away. The cabin-door opened so quietly that we both started. I saw Captain Brand's face was flushed. He turned his head aside and spoke to the doctor.

"You go in first, Doctor Maxse, and then leave Mrs. Stewart and her daughter alone together."

"Tyrant to the last! Why may I not go in at once?"

But I only thought this, I did not speak. I felt in a dull, sullen stupor. It seemed to me that among them they would let my mother die without me, and yet I had no power to struggle or dispute. I knew that the least agitation might end all hope. Doctor Maxse came out in a few minutes, and held the door for me to go in. I was alone with her at last. She looked better, and my voice came back as I kissed her.

"You are better, darling," I said.

She held up her hand and stopped me, and then she spoke. I cannot tell exactly what she said, the words so stunned me that I have never been able to recall them, though I gathered in their meaning, but my face must have shown the strong horror I felt, for it seemed to me that her imploring look roused me from a troubled sleep. I was standing close to her; she held my hand clasped in hers.

"You will say 'Yes,' my darling—my own good, obedient child. I cannot die in peace till you say 'Yes.' Gertrude, Captain Brand loves you truly. He is a good man, and you will love him in time."

She drew my hand to her lips, but I made no answering caress. I stood like a stone, and then I choked down the words that seemed to come rushing to my lips—words of loathing at what she had said;—but this must have been in idea, for I know I stood quiet and stupefied. It must be all a dream, play-acting—it cannot be reality. My mother, my darling mother, who loves me so dearly, who even now is

passing away from me, cannot have asked me to marry Captain Brand, at this time, at once, by her bedside!

I try to rouse myself. I try to cry out and protest, but my tongue is dumb. I look at my mother, and all my faculties are overmastered by the dread of that which I see so plainly on her face. The momentary glow has faded; to me it seems that already the Awful Presence is beside us, that the purple shadow of his grasp is already stealing over her. I do not think I said Yes, but I must in some way have signified consent. Presently the cabindoor opened, and Captain Brand came in, followed by Doctor Maxse, and then Mr. Howard in his surplice.

To this day I cannot understand my own conduct. I remember watching Mr. Howard quite curiously while he looked out the place in a Prayer-book, and then I stood listening—even when I was told to say "I will," and to repeat the other words after

the clergyman, I obeyed it mechanically, not once did my mind connect this ceremony with myself. It was something done for my mother—there thought remained arrested; it was impossible to withdraw it from her dearly-loved face to myself. Only when the words came-"Those whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder,"-I felt roused. I started and tried to pull the ring off. I had seen my mother hold out her hand to Captain Brand, and I had watched him draw a ring from her finger and then place it on mine, but it was too late to protest. As I started, Doctor Maxse raised his hand in warning, and then he bent over the bed.

I left the ring on my finger, and clasped my hands in terror. I hardly waited for Mr. Howard to finish, I ran to the bedside—my mother had fainted.

CHAPTER II.

A CRISIS.

"EVERYONE must go away except Miss Stewart;" the doctor spoke decidedly, and I saw in a minute that in a crisis like this he was quite another person from the soft, dawdling man I had thought him. He gave me quick orders in a low voice. I was so fluttered and frightened that it was a relief to have to obey those short, decided orders.

I needed comfort sorely, for I could scarcely hope. I listened, but I could hear no sound of breathing from the bed. I dared not speak to Doctor Maxse; he never took his eyes for one moment from the face

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I could no longer see. It seemed to me that hours went by, and yet he did not move from the bedside, he never even turned his head as he took from my hand all he asked for. At last he looked round at me.

"Will you go to my surgery, and bring the small phial I left ready on the table."

I was so blind and sick with fear that my fingers seemed as if they could not find what he had told me to seek—fear that when I reached the cabin again I should be too late.

When I came back there was no longer the same dreadful silence; I could hear her breathing—only too well—surely such breathing could not go on—it was not breathing, it was like the gasping, shuddering struggle of some hunted creature. I thought such desperate efforts must surely be the last. I could not bear it; I sank into a chair and covered up my face.

"Don't be frightened, my dear child,"-

I was shocked by the cheeriness in the doctor's voice—"you will be no use, you know, if you get frightened."

What wonderful creatures doctors are; they always know exactly how to give a woman the spur. I was up, almost calm, in an instant, and tried to smile as I handed him the hartshorn bottle. I wondered how I could have despised Doctor Maxse; his devotion all through the night was untiring; he seemed to have no thought of self. I could have kissed his hand in the intensity of my gratitude. How long the night was, alternating between awful silence, when I believed all hope was ended, and spasmodic struggles, which I could not hear without a shudder.

Daylight at last,—creeping, creeping in, as if it were ashamed of itself; then coming more strongly, it peered into the dark corners of the cabin, cleared the gloom out of them, and reached the bed. Then I saw how deadly white was the face lying there

with closed eyelids. I caught Doctor Maxse's arm with both hands.

"Is she—?" I waited for his answer, and I thought if he said "Yes" I would jump into the sea. He turned from the bed and took my hand.

"Hush!" He drew me to the door, and came out into the gallery. "This is sleep at last, my dear child. I can't feel sure even now how it will end, but I think there is more real hope of life than there has been these two days."...

I seemed to hear these words distinctly, and then came a sudden blank; I suppose I fainted. I learned afterwards that Doctor Maxse had carried me from the gallery into my own cabin, and shut the door on me. When I opened my eyes I was lying in my own berth in the little inner cabin that led out of my mother's.

"I don't remember going to bed," I said; I sat up, and pushed the hair out of my eyes. "I only remember Doctor Maxse

saying that—" and then I saw I was not undressed, and that the door which led into my mother's cabin was closed.

What had happened? I did not stay to think, but jumped out of bed and gently opened the door. Ours was a stern cabin. My little nook was dark enough, but there was plenty of light when I opened the door. Some one rose from beside my mother's bed, and I saw that it was Captain Brand, but he did not speak, he just pointed cautiously to the bed, and went away.

Before I even looked at my mother, I went to the cabin door and drew the bolt across it. "He shall not come in here ever again—hateful man!"

I went and looked at her; the unnatural paleness had left her face, and her breathing was soft and regular.

I suppose most people would have felt some kind of thankfulness for this unlookedfor change. I did not. I went back to my own little cabin and burst into a fit of passionate crying. I had been deceived—my mother's life had not been in danger. Doctor Maxse and Captain Brand had planned it all, and my young life had been the sacrifice. In my excitement I am not sure that I quite acquitted my mother. Oh! what had she done?

"But I don't care"—I drew myself up proudly; "I believe such a marriage is not real or binding. I will make mamma promise to keep me away from Captain Brand till we get to England, and then we can both hide ourselves where he will never find us. How can he, when he is always at sea?"

I was no longer afraid of him. He had done me so great an injury that I threw off at once all the respect which I had till now felt for him. My lips curled contemptuously.

"I shall treat him as he deserves to be treated. I have been silly and childish to feel afraid; he is not a gentleman in feeling, or he could not have taken such a base advantage. I believe, if I liked, I could have him punished for it. But what could I expect from the captain of a merchant vessel?"

I went back to my mother; her sleep lasted so long that I fell into a doze beside her. I wakened up struggling with some dream-adversary; my mother's eyes were open, and some one was tapping gently at the door. I kissed her, and at the sight of her smile, and the fondness in her dear eyes, for the first time I felt grateful for the change. I threw my arms round her and began to cry. She stroked my hair gently, and then she too heard that odious tapping. I had made up my mind not to answer it, I guessed it was Captain Brand, but my mother pointed to the door.

"Open it, darling," she whispered.

I had a hard struggle to obey, but somehow everyone always obeyed my mother. She was quiet, but it was impossible to set aside her will; you felt that there was nothing impulsive in it, nothing that had not been well considered and planned beforehand; it seemed to me that the only impulsive action in her life had been that hateful marriage ceremony.

- "Who's there?" I said.
- "Open the door," said Doctor Maxse, in a peremptory voice, and I obeyed, for he was a very different person to me from the Doctor Maxse of yesterday.

He went up to my mother, felt her pulse, chatted a moment with her, and then asked me to come with him to his surgery. As soon as I was inside the little den he shut the door.

- "Now, Miss Stewart, I must give you one caution. Your mother is better, much better than I could have hoped for, but her entire recovery depends more on you than on me."
 - "On me?" I stared at him.
- "Yes; any excitement will be fatal, and she will talk to you, of course, about——"

he hesitated and looked in my face; he saw something there which made him stammer, "I—I—know you will be careful, but whatever"—such a stress on the ever—"Mrs. Stewart may say, you must not contradict her, you must not answer so as to agitate her. I warn you her life depends on your care."

I felt my face flush violently.

Doctor Maxse seems to me insolent. Is he in league with Captain Brand? I suppose he saw my horror last night, and he fears I shall protest against what happened, just as if I should be likely to contradict her at such a time.

"Is that all you have to say?"

Doctor Maxse looked so pained by my haughty manner that I held out my hand. I believe I thought myself a young queen on board the *Adelaide*.

"I have not thanked you for your kindness and devotion, Doctor Maxse, but I shall never forget it."

The doctor smiled, and held the door open for me to pass out. The smile disconcerted me.

"What does he mean? I said nothing absurd;" and then it glimmered across my thoughts that perhaps, after all, the doctor did not care whether I forgot or remembered my gratitude. "He must care, at any rate, about mamma's gratitude, if he cares nothing for mine."

I went back to her. To my surprise she did not speak of what had happened. She seemed unwilling to speak at all; only anxious that I should lie down and rest.

CHAPTER III.

AN EXPLANATION.

MY mother's strength came back more rapidly than the doctor expected. Just a week after the night that he had despaired of her recovery, he said she had better go up on deck and sit there for a little.

I was very unwilling to go. I had not seen Captain Brand since that dreadful night, and I shrank from him. He had not come to the cabin even to ask how my mother was. There was a poor girl on board, a protégée of the old clergyman, and she waited on us and got all we wanted.

My mother had not once spoken to me of

the marriage, or of Captain Brand, and the doctor's warning kept me silent. I was too much afraid of agitating her to begin on the subject; besides, I did not wish to discuss it while on board. I was helpless at present; but when I had got my mother safe away all by myself in England, I felt sure I could persuade her to do as I wished.

I looked at her wistfully when Doctor Maxse went away, but I saw she was preparing to obey his order, so I kept silent.

"We shall not stay long on deck," I thought, "and perhaps the air will do her good."

We found a most comfortable restingplace ready for us. A sofa had been brought up, and an awning stretched over it; and cushions and wraps enough for half-a-dozen invalids lay scattered about.

But I would not praise anything. I felt that all this care was due to Captain Brand. I settled my mother comfortably among her cushions, and opened my book to go on with our reading—for I had read to her constantly during this week of recovery.

Just as I began, I heard some one coming along the deck. I knew the firm tread at once; my hands got cold, and my face hot; but I fixed my eyes on the sea, shimmering and glittering in the sunshine. I did not even turn my head while Captain Brand was speaking to my mother; speaking in such a low, gentle voice, full of tender deference.

"Yes, he can be gentle now he has got all he wants, the hypocrite! I hate him!"
I said this to the sea.

"Gertrude, my dear, here is Captain Brand."

For an instant I thought I would not shake hands with him; but I changed my mind. It would be better not to acknowledge any change in our relations to one another.

"I will be exactly the same as if nothing

had happened, and then he cannot presume to be different."

For I felt that, although I was only sixteen years old, I was a lady, and, as it seemed to me, made of quite different clay from this big, awkward-looking captain of a merchant ship.

I gave him a lifeless hand; but, when I felt the firm clasp in which he held it, I had not courage to act out my resolution. I had meant to look fully at him, and instead, I hung down my head, for very shame of the burning blushes that seemed to scorch my eyelashes. I pulled my hand angrily away, and jumped up. could hardly keep from crying with anger at myself. I a lady! Why, I was behaving like a foolish little school-girl !-- "a sort of creature like Dora, in 'David Copperfield," I thought. I had always felt an intense dislike to that very uncomfortable and impulsive young person.

Neither my mother nor Captain Brand

took any notice. I had rarely joined in their talks; why should I join now? I walked up and down as far from them as I could.

"An explanation must come now. As soon as that hateful man goes away, mamma will call me to account—and I can't be a hypocrite—but no, I must not be open with her"—here I could hardly keep from crying again—"I must not show her my disgust, for fear of agitating her. I hope Doctor Maxse is right about this; but he has not always been right. When I think what that first mistake of his caused, it seems to shake all belief in him out of me."

"Gertrude!"

I looked back at the sound of my mother's voice. Captain Brand was sitting beside her. As I drew near he got up, but I did not look at him.

"I am tired already. I am going below with the captain. He will come up and tell you when we have finished our chat. The fresh air will do you good, dear." He gave her his arm as tenderly as if she had been his mother. I watched them out of sight, and then a great bitterness came to me.

"My mother actually likes this man. She places confidence in him. Can she really mean him to be my husband?"

I was left alone with my thoughts—more alone than I had been for some days. My mother had required such constant care during this week of recovery. I began to try and realise this strange marriage.

Had my mother repented her haste, and was she now wilfully deceiving Captain Brand, and trying to keep friends with him till we landed? or could it be possible that she thought I should ever consent really to become his wife?

There was not peace or rest in either thought. I walked faster and faster up and down the deck. At one of my rapid turns I met the captain face to face.

"Will you go to Mrs. Stewart now?"

He spoke gently, but he did not look at me; he was plainly as indifferent as I was myself. When I got to the ladder, he did not even offer me his hand. So much the better; I should only have refused it. My cheeks grew hot again.

Perhaps Captain Brand only consented to the marriage from compassion, to please my mother. It is scarcely likely a grave, quiet man of thirty—I am sure he is as old as that; and thirty is an immense age—it is not likely he can wish to be burdened with a useless, wild young creature of sixteen. But I am not going to be his wife—I never will, even if he does wish it. Still it is dreadful to think he only offered to marry me out of compassion.

I felt vexed with myself, and everyone else, by the time I reached the cabin. My mother looked anxiously at me as I went in. She seemed very tired; she was sitting in her easy-chair, propped up by some of the cushions Captain Brand had carried down.

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By a contradiction I had no power to struggle against, my tongue broke loose.

"How badly that man has placed the pillows!—how awkward he is!"

This was not true. I had not then learned how skilful, in its tenderness, a man's nursing can be.

"Hush!" My mother took fast hold of one of my hands, and put an end to my fidgeting among the cushions. "Sit down here, my darling. I have very much to say, and I may not be long with you, Gertrude."

"Oh, mother!"—I hid my eyes on her knees—"why, you get stronger and better every day. You never have been so ill as Doctor Maxse made you think you were."

I looked up at her as I ended. Such a sad, sweet smile was on her face.

"You must not be deceived, Gertrude. There is so little life left in me that any shock would destroy it. I believe that only Captain Brand's proposal, and the

revulsion it caused, saved me then."
I raised my head.

"I can't understand it," I said indignantly; "I should have thought it would have made you miserable."

And then I was so sorry and frightened at my own words that I threw my arms round her and kissed her. But my mother was very patient.

"Listen, my dear child; you had better know all at once. I am taking you to England at a ruinous expense, Gertrude, in your father's present circumstances, in the hope of finding you a home there. I think you know that your father and I offended all our relations by our marriage. Lady Chilham was the only person who has ever shown an interest in us, and through her I hoped to have effected a reconciliation; but the evening before we sailed came the news of her death. It seemed too late then to retract—I hoped that some unlooked for chance might smoothe my way; I feel now that I acted wrongly. It would have been far wiser to give up the voyage, for it is very doubtful if I ever reach England. I have neither the means of living there, or of securing a passage home, and your father cannot help me. If I am taken from you, you cannot go among your relations alone and unprotected; this would offend them. Besides, how could you be left without some lawful guardian?"

I did not believe her fears. I thought she was only trying to reconcile me to the marriage.

"Mother, anything would be better than to be the wife of Captain Brand."

She grew so white at my vehemence that I was frightened into silence. She pointed to the medicine which always revived her, and I gave some of it to her. My fingers shook, and I could hardly measure it into a wine-glass.

"If there had been time, Gertrude, you should not have been hurried—I thought I

was dying; but, indeed, my darling, I am happy about you; you are too young now to think of love or marriage either. married very early, but then I was less of a child than you are. Captain Brand is a considerate, noble-minded man; he savs he feels you are very young, and that the marriage has been hasty, and he does not wish to claim you as his wife for two years at least. In that time, my darling, you will learn to love this good man; you are a dear child, but you are scarcely worthy of him yet, or able to appreciate him. I cannot tell you how highly I think of him."

I started up, I actually writhed; surely my mother was infatuated. I, the daughter of Algernon Stewart, the grand-daughter of the Honourable Duncan Stewart, not worthy of Captain Brand! I kept silence, but I could not help frowning.

"You are angry, dearest; it is only natural; you have been robbed of the right

which a girl considers she has to choose her own husband, but I am not sure that this is a correct idea; if we had gone on living in Tasmania, very likely your husband would have been chosen for you. In our class of life, Gertrude, a girl can so seldom consult inclination in marrying—"

"You did, mother."

I could not see my mother's face, but her voice sounded very feeble and broken.

"Yes, we did, but our children have paid the penalty of our obstinacy."

She closed her eyes as if she were weary, but I could not have gone on talking. I was so young that, when a new thought came to me, I fastened on it at once, till I had made out what irritated my curiosity.

"Oh!" I said to myself, "I begin to understand; papa and mamma found out that marrying for love was a mistake—they have never seemed quite as much lovers as I think married people should be;" here I shivered at the thought of Captain Brand.

"I suppose trials and worry do weaken love, and yet it seems to me a poor kind of love that is weakened by them, and I am sure mamma must love in the best possible way."

This was a puzzle; I left off thinking about my parents, and came back to myself. It is not half so difficult to think about oneself as about others; one can imagine and picture for oneself, about others one can only puzzle and wonder, unless, indeed, one is like our old friend Miss Macnee, who is always settling the thread of other people's lives after her own pattern.

My thoughts went off in another direction; he would not claim me for two years, my mother said; this was better than I had expected. Of course I am not really married—I do not consider a marriage real unless it is in church—and if I get away, so that Captain Brand can never find me, I can marry somebody I do love, and be ever so happy—some one young and bright,

who has beautiful eyes, and who is a hero and a gentleman. I am sure all may be perfectly happy if they are careful to marry the right person.

And then came back my mother's sad look when she spoke of her own marriage.

"Dear me,"—my head began to ache with all this unwonted thought—"I wonder which I mean, the right person or the person one loves; why can't they always be the same?"

Meanwhile my mother sank into a doze which lasted till evening, and these ideas about marriage had so disturbed me that I got a book to try to shake off the memoryof them. I had been reading "I Promessi Sposi" with my mother, and I went on with it to myself, till there was so much movement in the ship that the letters seemed to jump about; but I was too much interested to be troubled about a rough sea. Lucia's love must have given her some sure intuition that Renzo was the right man,

or she would not have gone through so much for his sake. And then again, Desdemona—Othello was not the right husband for her, of course, or he would not have murdered her, and yet she married for love—ah! but then I never could like Desdemona; she is deceitful, and besides, she marries without her father's consent. Here my cheeks grew hot.

"If I cared very much for anyone, should I marry and please myself, or mind what my father said?"

There came a sudden knock at our cabin door.

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT ALONE.

THE mate, Mr. Stacey, opened the door before I said "Come in."

"By your leave, ladies, I must put you in the dark."

He went to our little scuttle, and in a few minutes we were in total darkness.

"What are you doing, Mr. Stacey?" I said.

"There is a squall coming, I suppose," my mother said gently.

I thought she was asleep, she had been lying some time with her eyes closed.

"Not much of one, ma'am, but our cap-

tain always likes to be on the safe side;" and I heard the cabin door close.

I groped about for a match to light the lamp. I had been sitting half-asleep before Mr. Stacey came, and now, as I moved, I found that it was difficult to keep steady, the ship was heeling over. At last I managed to light the lamp, and then as I moved away-in an instant the cabin seemed to go upside down, and every loose article in it flew into a heap on one side. My mother was flung off her bed, and I found myself close beside her. I was too much bewildered to feel actual fear. We both lay still; there was a fearful cracking overhead, with dashing, furious sounds, as if the sea itself were over us, and then a roar like thunder shook the ship. I was terribly frightened now. If I had not had my mother to take care of, I believe I should have fainted with terror. T tried to help her up, but she resisted.

"We had best keep still for a little,

Gertrude," she said; "we are safer lying down here; I have been in a squall before; it may go off as suddenly as it began, or it may last some time."

I wondered that she could speak so calmly.

"Is there—do you think there is danger?" I asked this in an agony of fear. All my new-born hatred of life had fled at once. "I will go and ask if there is danger; and if there is, if Captain Brand is worth anything he must save the ship."

I scrambled up on my feet, but before I could cling to any support, I was thrown down again. My mother stretched out her hand, and held my arm fast.

"It is useless," she said; "you cannot reach the deck, my darling; and if you could, you would perhaps be washed overboard. We cannot help; we can only be patient, and we can pray, Gertrude."

I had not thought of this, and it was a

relief to be able to do anything, though in those days prayer was to me a mere stated formality said out of a book. My mother prayed aloud earnestly that we might be delivered from the fury of the storm. I tried to follow her words, but I could not. My throat was choked. Still it was comforting to listen to her. The lamp went out while she was still praying; but I was afraid to move to re-light it.

Oh, how awful the darkness was, and how it doubled the horror of the furious, roaring sea!—for it was not the empty, silent atmosphere the word darkness suggests; it was a blackness filled with the roaring of wind and water, with the groans of the unhappy, tormented ship as she strained and heaved under the mighty buffets that struck her, till I wondered she was not sent reeling to the bottom.

I clenched my hands in agony; I felt so strong just then, and able to do anything; it was maddening to be lying helpless on the cabin-floor. Why, we might be drowned, cooped up there, before anyone could help us. Just as this thought came, my mother slipped her soft hand into mine. How cold it was! I felt her face, and that, too, was cold. Here was something I could do. I folded my arms round her, and tried to keep her warm.

Hours went by in the dark silence, broken with us only now and then by my mother's faintly-uttered prayers; while overhead and all around the incessant tumult went on raging. It seemed to me impossible that any ship could endure much longer the violent blows which struck her. When I look back to those long, awful hours, I feel quite sure that I never in my life went through anything so difficult as those hours during which I lay still and passive, with my mother clasped in my arms. Courage and daring would have been so much easier than that long spell of patience.

I must have fallen sound asleep at last

with exhaustion. I waked suddenly, and heard voices in the cabin.

"Then it is uncertain how far we are from land?" My mother was speaking.

"Quite."

I had so expected to hear Captain Brand's voice that I started when Doctor Maxse's came instead.

"The ship has drifted out of her course in this gale; it was the only chance of safety to lay her to the wind. Captain Brand has saved the ship, but he could not save her from serious damage; but, please God, the worst is over. You see, the men have such confidence in the Captain that they work with a will."

By this time I had fully wakened; the din overhead had ceased, and I began to feel that the deck was wet, and that I too was wet and shivering. Doctor Maxse stood close by me, trimming the lamp; he turned round and looked at me.

"Ah, you are wet, Miss Gertrude. In

half an hour or so you shall come on deck and breathe fresh air again."

I looked at my mother; she was deadly white. "How long have we been shut up here?" I said.

"About eight hours or so." He spoke quickly, and then he stooped down over my mother, and held a case-bottle to her lips. "Have you got a biscuit anywhere, Miss Gertrude?—your mamma wants her breakfast, and there's no knowing when the galley will be fit for use again."

I found it was easier to move, though I was stiff with lying on the deck, but the ship still throbbed and quivered as if each movement gave her pain.

Doctor Maxse followed me, and, as I opened the biscuit tin, he put his mouth to my ear and whispered—

"The storm is over, but it has done terrible damage—not a word to your mother. Don't fuss about changing your wet clothes; if you have money or valuables, get them and fasten them inside your gown."

I stood puzzled, trying to make out his meaning, but he went back to my mother, and helped her on to the sofa, and fed her with biscuit. Did he mean we were in danger, or had I fancied these words? I dared not question him; he was smiling cheerfully at my mother; evidently he wished her not to know. I looked at her, and her face was now ghastly in its whiteness.

"Thank you, Doctor," she said. I trembled at the weak, quavering voice. "It is very good of you to come to us, but we must not detain you. I am sure you have patients who need you among those poor sailors." She looked at him anxiously, and I saw his face grow graver.

"There are just a few casualties," he said. "Well, Miss Gertrude, I will look in presently, and take you both up on deck, if your mamma feels better."

He went away, and my mother kept on vol. 1.

eating biscuit. It seemed to me she was forcing herself to eat, for she asked for more after I had left off giving it. I stood quite unnerved. I wondered whether she had heard the Doctor's whisper.

"The Doctor is right, Gerty," she said presently; "we may still be in danger, though the storm is over."

She saw the terror in my face, and she smiled cheerfully at me.

"We are in God's hands, dearest. He is with us quite as much in danger as He is in times of safety; you and I can do nothing."

"Oh—I can—I can!" I could not keep back a sob of agony. "I can go up on deck and see with my own eyes what has really happened; there is no use in being cooped up here in ignorance."

"Gerty—I—I do not want to be left." I knew she said this to keep me below; it was so unlike my mother to think of herself. "Will you find me my little writing-case, darling, and will you put your watch,

and your rings, and anything you want to take care of, inside the body of your gown."

It was very awful to hear her speak in this calm way, and to see that she was aware of the doctor's fears; but the awe itself quieted me, and checked the wild terror Doctor Maxse's warning had roused. I felt suddenly that she had only me to take care of her, and that I must be strong and brave.

"I have only my watch," I said, "and my rings. I put all my other ornaments in my large writing-desk, and that is in one of the tin cases in the hold."

My mother did not speak again, and I tried to occupy myself with the lamp; it burned so very dimly. I longed intensely to see daylight again; the confined atmosphere must surely suffocate my mother, I thought—the cabin felt like a prison in the semi-darkness.

"Mamma,"—I tried to speak very resolutely—"it must be more than half-an-hour since Doctor Maxse was here. Now that

the wind has lulled, the sailors cannot be busy. I shall go on deck, and get some one to open the scuttle. As we are the the only passengers, I really think Captain Brand is very neglectful. I must get this shutter opened."

I moved to the cabin-door, and stood there a moment looking at her. In that instant while I looked we were flung up into the air, and then we fell with eyerything else on the deck, while the ship crashed and grated horribly, and reeled over as if she were going to the bottom of the sea.

In that awful darkness I thought, "Is this death?"—and then, I do not know how long after, a strong arm lifted me up, and I was carried into daylight.

The sudden light made me close my eyes. "All right, my men," said Captain Brand's voice, and I saw it was he how held me.

"Save my mother!" I cried out.

"All right, my child, your mother is safe;" and he fastened me quickly to some rigging, and then I saw Mr. Stacey and one of the sailors placing my mother close beside me.

"Keep up a good heart—we shall be all right by-and-by," the Captain said; and he went away.

I looked round—that awful crash was still quivering through my body, but my courage had not gone again. My mother looked less ghastly than she had looked in the cabin, and this cheered me a little. The ship seemed a wreck; one of the masts was gone. The starboard bulwark had been entirely carried away, and all the fittings of the deck had been washed overboard. We could see the fore-hatchway from where we were fastened, and as I looked my heart seemed to stand still. There was a knot of sailors there, baling water in buckets out of the ship.

I looked quickly at my mother, and I

saw that her eyes were also fixed on the group.

"But, mother,"—my own voice startled me, it was so hoarse—"I thought there were pumps to get rid of the water?"

She looked very grave.

"You may be sure that if the pumps were of any use they would be working; probably they are choked. I believe the ship will not hold together long."

As she spoke, I saw on the farther side of the deck three sailors lying motionless. I guessed that they were dead, and I looked away, in the hope that my mother would not see them.

It is very strange to look back on those minutes. I do not think I had the least hope of escape; but I had no fear. Either the awe of the whole scene had blunted my senses, or, as everyone else was calm, I was controlled into the same state. I lay watching the glimpses I got of the sea, for I could not see much, I was so low on the

deck; except when the ship seemed to go down into the trough made by the waves, and then the water itself, like a huge green monster, came thundering over us. Some of the sailors were baling with rapid energy of movement, and other sailors, near where we lay, were busy at something else. Once I saw Captain Brand, but he passed out of sight again.

Suddenly, a foaming wave broke roaring over us; the ship reared up on one end like a frightened horse; if we had not been securely fastened we must have been washed overboard, and we felt the ship crunch down violently.

"God have mercy on us!" my mother's faint voice said; there was a loud, sudden outcry from the men at the fore-hatchway; they ran up towards us, and began to unfasten the long boat. I looked for Captain Brand; I felt that the men would leave us alone to perish in the sinking ship.

In an instant—so suddenly that he must

have been quite near—Captain Brand was among the sailors; he was so much taller than any of them that he seemed to tower above them all.

"Stop there!" The men stood still at I could not make out his next words, but he spoke as calmly as if there were no danger, and yet I felt sure the ship was sinking. My mother closed her eyes; I tried to understand all that was happening. I could not see over the ship's side, but there was plainly some difficulty and delay in casting off the boat. lost all my fear as I watched Captain Brand; I was fascinated by his firm energy, and by the implicit way in which the men obeyed his rapid, decided orders. It seemed as if he did not need a moment to plan or reflect: as if he had foreseen all that was now happening, and knew every detail of our situation, and what was needful. At last the boat was lowered, and he came up to us.

"Now, Mrs. Stewart,"—he spoke quite calmly—"we must see about you; don't be afraid, all is going well; we have only one boat to trust to, but it is the safest."

He unfastened my mother, raised her very tenderly, and carried her away in his arms.

He stopped and looked back earnestly at me over his shoulder.

"I will come for you when your mother is safe."

"No, no; send anyone for me; oh, don't leave my mother."

I clasped my hands; even then he could smile cheerfully.

"I will save you both, please God, but your mother shall take no harm."

As soon as he was out of sight an icy coldness crept round my heart; I tried to see Doctor Maxse, but I could not; I caught a glimpse of Mr. Howard near where the boat had been lowered, but there seemed only a few sailors left on board.

Then I remembered that a captain is

always the last to leave a ship—suppose Captain Brand came back too late to save me, and I was left alone with him on this doomed vessel. I looked again. I could not see one sailor, and I felt sure the ship was lower in the water than when Captain Brand brought me up on deck. Time seemed to pass so slowly, and it was deadly cold.

I begin to wonder which is the best, to go down alone in the ship, or to perish with all the others in that boat. We may be hundreds of miles from land, after what Doctor Maxse said. I have read ghastly stories of shipwrecked people starving and dying one by one in the midst of the wide sea. . . . I am growing dull and stupefied with the cold, it begins to be all like a dream, not a real misery happening to myself; I forget even to think about my mother.

Ah! here is Captain Brand at last. In an instant he has lifted me up, and is carrying me like a baby in his strong arms; what a shelter they feel to me! He says, "Don't cling to me." I cannot see anything, and I feel him loose his hold, and I fall, but I am not hurt. I am safe in the boat, and Mr. Stacey is holding me.

"Where is he?" I say. I cannot see Captain Brand; but as I ask he leaps down into the boat, and in an instant we have got away from the side of the ship, for the men are rowing desperately; some of them are lying in the bottom of the boat. The boat is tossed up and down wildly; my mother is between me and Mr. Howard; I see all this in a strange unrealising way, and then I speak to my mother.

I am close beside her, but Captain Brand has wrapped a cloak round her which partly hides her face.

"Mother!" She does not answer, and I feel for her hand. I want her to know that we are close together, though we are cast adrift on that vast, rough, cruel-looking sea. Her hand feels icy cold.

"Mother, mother, speak to me!" My own voice startles me; there is so sharp a ring of anguish in it. I tear away the cloak from her face. Ah! there is no mistaking the pinched outline, the awful greyness stamped there. But I must master Death himself; my mother shall not leave me!

"Doctor!—Doctor Maxse!"

I look round wildly. No one answers; and then I see that Dr. Maxse is not among us. Captain Brand has gone to the helm. Mr. Howard and Mr. Stacey come at my cry, and try their utmost to revive my mother; but very soon Mr. Stacey gives up his efforts, and goes to Captain Brand, and takes his place at the helm. I seem to feel that Captain Brand will revive her. bends over her, and then he lays his hand on her heart. Oh! the anguish I learn from his face. He draws the cloak quickly round her, and lays her gently down in the bottom of the boat. I clasp his hand in both mine, and try to speak, but I cannot—I read the truth in his face.

Never till I die will this awful picture leave my memory; even now I can hardly write about it. Heavy storm-clouds still hang on the horizon, but a broad glare of sunlight glitters over the measureless space of wild stormy sea, glitters on the sinking ship, now far away, and on ourselves. Mr. Howard and the girl I have spoken of are crouching in utter misery; the sailors, with their brown, sad, downcast faces, row with all their might, some few are lying exhausted at the bottom of the boat; and Captain Brand is looking at me with a great sorrow on his face. This is all I can remember distinctly.

Then everything grows confused, and I lose consciousness. . . .

I seemed to rouse suddenly from sleep; I opened my eyes, to find that I was being lifted up, and carried, it seemed to me, a long way upstairs, and then I was laid gently down on a bed, and I fell asleep again.

CHAPTER V.

AN AWAKENING.

LEARNED afterwards that, after being out at sea in the boat all day, towards evening we were picked up by the Eclair, a small French vessel bound for Havre. though, when I first roused from my long unconsciousness. I fancied I was safe on board the Adelaide. But as I looked up I saw, just above the sofa on which I lay, a mirror with a silver sconce on each side of it; there had been nothing of this kind in our cabin on board the Adelaide. T rose up on my elbow and caught a glimpse of my face—only a glimpse; I was so weak and giddy that I fell back on the pillow. I began to doubt my own identity as much as that of the cabin—the face I had seen in the glass was too pale and thin to be mine.

"This is a dream," I thought, and I lay still for some time with closed eyelids; but gradually thought wakened up, and memory came back vividly, and with such a sharp sting of agony that I longed to escape its bitterness, and felt I could not lie there bearing it. I sat up again, and I saw that I had been undressed, and that my clothes lay neatly folded beside me. dim memory began to stir that in my sleep I had felt some one bending over me, giving me something to drink. I dressed myself with difficulty; I felt very weak, and as I walked across to the cabin-door my head seemed to reel. I opened the door, and I saw some one sitting just outside it: it was the girl who had waited on us on board the She jumped up at once.

"Oh, thank goodness, miss, you've waked up at last; the Captain will be terri-

ble pleased, that he will; you've been lying there, miss, for days and days, and we've just fed you, miss, as if you was a hinfant."

- "Whom do you mean by we?" I spoke crossly.
- "Please, miss, may I come in?"—she made a deep curtsey and looked frightened—"your bed, miss, do want making, that it do." She went up to the sofa and began to pull off the bedclothes.
 - "What ship is this?"

I sat down, for I could not stand.

"It's a French ship, miss, as picked us up, and it was only me and the Captain as have waited on you. The Captain wouldn't let a soul else in. Oh, he will be glad."

The colour spread over my face. I felt desperately proud and angry all in a moment.

"Where's Doctor Maxse?" It seemed to me that the doctor would have been a much fitter nurse than Captain Brand.

"Lor! miss!"—the girl's eyes opened

widely—"I forgot you didn't know—how should you, poor dear? The poor doctor, he fell overboard and was drownded, just before we was all going away in the boat. Ah, miss, we was out in that boat all day, till this ship picked us up. I never thought we should be saved. Yes, miss, the prayers was read for the poor doctor at the same time as they was read for your poor dear mamma——"

She stopped abruptly, and looked frightened. I guessed that she had been cautioned not to tell me. I had not had time to gather up my thoughts, but her words fell on me like a heavy blow. I sank down on a seat.

"Do you mean"—I could hardly speak
—"that Mrs. Stewart has been buried in
the sea?"

"Well, miss, please don't mind," she spoke soothingly, "you see they couldn't help it; they waited, but you never roused to be sensible, and the French captain he was positive

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against keeping a dead body on board, so our Captain had to give in, but he was mortal vexed, I know."

I covered my face with my hands. At that moment my grief was so bitter that I longed to be lying beside my darling mother.

When I looked up the girl had finished making my bed; she was staring at me pitifully.

"Do you say this is a French ship?" Tasked.

"Yes, miss, it's the *Heclair*, and you and me, miss, is the only females on board."

"You can go now, Harriet."

She went, and I flung myself on the couch in an agony of sorrow. I could not rouse myself from it. Harriet came with my dinner, but I could not speak, it seemed as if my heart must break under this terrible anguish. It was evening when I at last roused, and sitting up on my sofa began to think.

I was indeed alone. I had pitied myself on board the Adelaide, with my mother beside me, and with two years of escape between myself and Captain Brand. I thought now how happy such a state had been. How could I escape from Captain Brand? What refuge had I against him? He was my only protector on board this strange ship.

"I would rather be without one than have him to take care of me." I went across to the cabin door and fastened it; but this hard despair was only momentary, and all thought of myself or of Captain Brand yielded to unutterable sorrow.

Yes, I was indeed left alone. My mother was gone—taken away so suddenly, and just as I had learned to love her truly. How little store we had all set by her at home! We had all loved her, I suppose, as girls think they love their mothers; we had taken her watchful, tender care over us as a matter of course; she was our mother; a mother was always loving and careful. I had seen very little

of her in our home, but now thinking over the life there, I knew how much she must have cared for us.

Ah, but we had never thought of her, and of her feelings; we had gone on living for, and thinking of ourselves—our comfort, our happiness, our future—there had been scarcely any self-forgetfulness for her sake, we had never tried-I sobbed to myself in my lonely misery—to pour back into her heart some of the tenderness she had so fondly, so gently shown. We had, perhaps, tried to be good children sometimes, but there had been no loving anxiety in our hearts lest we might fail in daughterly ten-Till those last days on board the derness. Adelaide I had never felt anxious about her health. And if we had been at home perhaps she would have been left in this last illness to the care of servants. Just then I felt that I would give up all prospect of happiness if I could only have my darling mother back to love once more. Thinking

so of her, I softened towards Captain Brand.

"She liked him so much, I think she even loved him; and how brave and noble he was in the wreck!"

I began to wish to see him; he could tell me all this last history, and he loved her too, and he could talk of her, and I longed to be with some one who had known and loved her; and yet half-an-hour after, when I heard steps outside my cabin, I shrank from a meeting with Captain Brand.

Still for the present, as long as we were on board the French ship, he was my fate, the only being I could look to for care and protection. It was a relief to hear the footsteps move on.

I am glad I have had time to think; if he had come in just now and found me crying, he would have treated me like a child, and I must show him at once that I am quite able to take care of myself, and that I do not wish for his advice.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CABIN OF THE "ECLAIR."

THE sun shines so brightly that the sea is like a huge shield of ribbed gold; strange-looking fish leap up high in the air, and through all this mirth of nature the little *Eclair* bounds forward, as if she rejoiced in these tokens of near harbourage. The French sailors are dancing and singing, every one on deck looks bright and happy.

I cannot bear it, my heart aches sorely, I will go below and shut out the sunshine. "Sunshine" was one of my pet names at home, because I was always ready for fun and frolic, and now I feel so out of har-

mony with the universal brightness that it seems as if even Nature is conspiring to injure me.

I said that I looked forward to seeing Captain Brand, and I have seen him. is now a week since my recovery, but I miscalculated my feelings; and just as shy sensitive natures can be frank and charming in letters, and stiff and awkward face to face, even with those they love dearly, so in presence of this big, grave-faced man I felt strange and timid; all the sympathy I was longing to exchange with him froze suddenly, and I actually drew my hand out of his because he held it a moment longer than I thought necessary. manner affected his, so that, instead of the soothing comfort I expected, I got a dry matter-of-fact narrative of the shipwreck, and all that had since happened.

"How could my darling mother like him?—what sympathy could she find with this stiff, cold man?" I had a special feeling against Captain Brand from the time we set sail in the Adelaide; for from the beginning I had felt afraid of him, and this vexed me.

Since this first talk about the shipwreck, Captain Brand seems to trouble himself little about me. I always find a comfortable scat ready for me on deck, and there are many little attentions in my cabin which I feel must be contrived by him, but somehow all this only makes me contradictory. It would be kinder in every way if he would let me forget him altogether.

The *Eclair* is a small merchant ship, and there is not much accommodation for passengers on board. I take my meals in my cabin; I come on deck once a day. I am not often likely to see Captain Brand, and till now I have only spoken to him and to the French captain. Mr. Howard is ill and stays below.

On this sunny morning I feel utterly

wretched. I get up impetuously from my comfortable resting-place to go below. I stoop to pick up a book I have let fall—a hand reaches it and gives it to me.

"Voilà, mademoiselle."

The French mate is close beside me; he looks at me attentively, so attentively that I feel I redden in thanking him, and then I try to pass on.

"Pardon, but mademoiselle is not, I hope, going below in such beautiful weather; it is so dull below. Ah!"

Here he shrugs his shoulders with a look of disgust. For a moment I feel indignant, and utterly alone and helpless.

"If my mother were here a man of this class would not dare even to look at me," I think, and smile bitterly at myself.

What does it matter? What am I now? I have forfeited my own station; it cannot signify what happens to me when I am actually married to the captain of a merchantman. I look at the Frenchman,



and I wish that Captain Brand was at least as young and as pleasant-looking. This mate has a bright face, which looks full of sunshine, as if it had only known Summer; there is no touch of Winter on it. A warm glow comes through his dark skin, and into his dark, lustrous eyes. His hair and beard are more crisp in their waves than those of a northern man. But these dark eyes scan my face so freely that I throw back my head in a way I have when I am annoyed. Just then I hear Captain Brand's step.

By some strange perversity I turn to look into his face. He is not looking at me. His eyes are fixed on the Frenchman, and I see how angry he is.

"If mademoiselle is in want of anything," he says to the mate in very bad French, "you should communicate with her through me."

But the mate seems not to understand English-French. He shakes his head and smiles, and then he turns away from Captain Brand, and points out to me a curious bird that has settled on the rigging.

How dare Captain Brand interfere with me? This is tyranny. I resolve to give him a lesson; he must learn that I am my own mistress, and that I shall talk to everyone I choose. I am not under his control.

At last I have found a way of punishing him for the great cruel wrong he has done me. The anger in his face teaches me how I can wound him. I smile at the French mate.

"That bird is very beautiful and curious too," I say, in French. I can speak French easily. "Do you know its name?"

I just glance up. Captain Brand is frowning at me now. "He thinks I am his property, does he?" I feel full of contradiction. I smile again at the French mate as he answers me. Captain Brand had better learn at once that I don't like him,

and that I would rather talk to any man than to him.

I have seen very few gentlemen. My two sisters are much older than I am, and I have always lived in the school-room with my governess. My mother said I must not appear in society till my sisters were married. My governess was more like a man than a woman, so I never talked nonsense with her. I have had no practice in flirting, but it is inborn in some girls, I believe.

Mysadness suddenly disappears; I am able to laugh and talk quite gaily with Monsieur Rendu. I feel happier than I have been for weeks; the Frenchman's light, laughing spirits cheer me, and, besides, I enjoy showing Captain Brand that I can talk when I please, though I am so dull and silent towards him.

After a bit Monsieur Rendu returns to his duty, and I move to go to my cabin.

I pass close by Captain Brand, but I do

not choose to look up at him. Frowning still, I hope; I think he will not interfere with me again so stupidly. Before I have passed him I feel his hand on my arm. I draw myself away; but I cannot get free from his heavy, firm grasp. Oh! how I hate him!

"Gertrude, listen to me," he says, in such a stiff, solemn voice, that I start and look up; "you are very young and—innocent;" he pauses before the word; perhaps he wishes to say ignorant; "you have only me to advise you and take care of you now; do not talk to that Frenchman."

A kind of wild pride flashes through my veins like an electric shock, but I do not show it. I try hard to keep up the cold manner I always assume towards him.

"Why not? You have nothing to do with me; I can do as I like."

I look at him, and all my fear leaves me. He is not quiet and self-restrained now; his face works uneasily, and he has grown quite red. I smile at the anger in his eyes; it is delightful to feel that I can torment him as much as I please, and that he has no power over me.

"Will you let me pass, please?" I say, politely. "I am tired of staying here."

"Then come below with me." He speaks roughly, and hurries me along, and then down the steps, till we stand at my cabindoor.

"You cannot come in here." My voice shakes, for I am trying not to cry, his manner so frightens me. I begin to wish I had not teased him. No one has ever spoken roughly to me except Captain Brand, and for the first time I shudder that I am alone among all these rude sailors.

He bends down over me, I dare not look up, his face is too near mine, but I know by his voice that he is not angry now.

"May I not come in?" he said so gently that I start. "I will go away directly if you still wish it; but I want to say a few words that I cannot say before others; all on board think I am your brother, and they were used to see me in and out of your cabin at first."

The blood rushes over my face. He has nursed and cared for me then during my illness. I dreaded this, and I am bitterly angry that he has had the chance of serving me, angry because he has a right to my gratitude; but it seems to give him a kind of power I am forced to obey. I stand sullenly while he opens the cabin-door, and then I go in, and he follows me.

I stand because I do not choose to ask him to sit down. I am glad to see him go and lean against the door, as far off from me as he can get.

"First"—he speaks very gently still—"I must ask you to hear me out, even if what I say vexes you. I have been so long at

sea that I am little used to the ways of society; it is franker to say at once that I am no doubt a rougher, plainer kind of man than those you have lived among; I have spent many years at sea, but I want you to understand that I don't mean to be unkind even when I seem roughest. I have been wishing to tell you this all along, my—" here he stops; there is a tone in his voice that controls me, it seems as if he is keeping down strong feeling. I do not know what to say, so I wait for him to go on.

"Just now you said I had nothing to do with you, Gertrude, but I must make this clear to you. I promised, perhaps unwisely, to leave you for two years wholly in your dear mother's care, but she was then likely to live; now that you are left alone, you must have a protector, or you will appear as friendless as she dreaded to leave you when she gave me a right to take care of you."

I hear again the strong, helpful tone in his

voice, which made me cling to him on the night of the shipwreck, but I will not listen to it; it is only my foolish fear of him coming back, and I strive against it, and tell myself I have a right to be very angry; it is mean and cowardly of Captain Brand to turn my mother's fears against me, and to remind me of that marriage.

"You have no right in me till I am eighteen. You have promised——" A sudden determination to escape possesses me, but I do not want to make him suspect it; still, if I can make him dislike me, he will be glad to break through our marriage, and then I shall be free. Surely no man wants to have a disagreeable wife. His next words surprise me. He does not look angry; he seems shocked by my behaviour, and speaks sternly.

"Once for all, Gertrude, you had better learn as soon as possible that I am an honourable man; if you had shown me this want of confidence before the night you

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married me, it would have been better for your future to have taken its chance."

"I wish it had," I say impetuously; "oh, how I wish it had!"

I feel my eyes flash, and then I am sorry for my imprudence. I look up hurriedly. No, Captain Brand is not angry; instead, I fancy his deep-set blue eyes have a pitiful tenderness in them. This frightens me into shyness again.

I like him angry best; if he makes love to me I shall hate him. He comes close to where I stand trembling with agitation.

"My dear child,"—his voice is wonderfully sweet for such a big, rough-looking man—"I suppose I ought to say I am of the same opinion, but I cannot say it truly as my wish. I ought long ago to have told you how repugnant it was to me to take you as I did, without asking you for your consent, but circumstances made this impossible; we could only consider your mother, and she wished it. I feel——"he



draws a deep breath, and looks so earnest "Try not to be that my eyes fix on his. angry with me, Gertrude, for saying thisbut I do feel so sure of winning your love one day that I cannot give you up now." My eyes droop, and I shrink away. He must have seen that I am shrinking. "How can I give you up, child? Is the holy ceremony that has joined us together nothing, —to be set aside by our mere will? have been too well taught to think so; we are one, Gertrude, till death divides us; but we will never argue about this. Now sit down quietly; I want to talk to you about yourself."

I try to speak out frankly, and tell him that I have never really consented, that I acted solely from fear of shortening my mother's life; if I could then have made myself trust him perhaps all might have been ended between us, but my words seem choked back in my throat, I am too much afraid of Captain Brand to speak out—too

strange to his character to understand him. To me he is only a rough, rude man, and his sudden change of manner makes me fear a violent outburst of passion if I tell him that nothing can ever change my feelings towards him. If he is so determined to make me his wife he can keep me prisoner for these two years; then what shall I do?"

No, I shall not tell him this; I hate deceit,—but frankness with Captain Brand would be a grievous mistake, so I hold my tongue.

He points to the one chair in the little cabin. It seems as if that stern, firm will of his seats me in it. He draws away and leans against the door again.

"You, poor dear child," he says; "left alone so young with no one but a rough fellow like me to care for you; it is very sad, but never mind," his voice has got cheerful at last, "you shall be made as happy as I can possibly make you." "I can never be happy again." I say this impetuously, and then I feel afraid that I have said too much, but he takes no notice.

"We must make a French port in a few days, and then we will settle our plans. Your dear mother feared that she might be taken from you, and she begged me to place you for a time with an old French friend of hers, Madame La Peyre. This lady lives in Normandy; I can therefore take you to her before we go to England, as the *Eclair* is bound for Havre. But if you like instead to go to my mother in England, I shall prefer it, and she will love you as if you were her own child."

I get red in an instant. It is so very unkind to make such a proposal. His mother! doubtless an ignorant, ill-bred person, with whom I should have no sympathy, and from whom I should have no chance of escape.

"Certainly I will go to the lady my

mother chose for my guardian. I have heard of Madame La Peyre."

I look up resolutely in Captain Brand's face; I believe he is smiling, and yet I am sure I spoke with dignity.

He is stupid as well as rough. He cannot understand manners. I must speak very plainly if I want him to know what I mean.

"Very well," he says, "you shall do as you please, though I do not much like French people or their ways, and I wish you could have been placed in England. I shall come and see you, and remember, my dear child, you must not keep any, the smallest trouble from me; write and tell me everything."

I smile at this; certainly I do not intend to write to Captain Brand.

"I don't ask you to do this as a task" he smiles again, just as if he sees into my thoughts—he has a sweet smile—"but



only because I can't have you worried or troubled about anything, and you have no one else to help you."

"You seem to forget my father," I say very coldly. I want to show Captain Brand I am not quite such a child as he fancies. "As soon as I land I shall write to my father, and he will give me advice as to what I am to do."

I look up; I hope he is really startled at last; but he is smiling still, and there is the same irritating touch of pity in his face I saw there before.

"Yes; you must write to your father, and my first business will be to write to Mr. Stewart. I have a letter to enclose to him, Gertrude,"—Gertrude again—" which your mother gave to me on that day, do you remember, when she took me below with her?"

Of course I remember; and my old feeling of jealous dislike grows worse. So



he got my mother to write exactly what he pleased. My eyes are full of angry tears.

"You can do as you choose, Captain Brand; it makes no difference to me, but my father will probably send for me."

He looks very sadly at me.

"I wish you would trust me, my child; I can't bear distressing you, and yet it is better to tell you that I feel sure that your father will not withdraw you from my protection."

I look incredulous.

"Well," he says, abruptly, as if he is growing tired; "there is just one more thing to be settled between us: a mother-less girl must have a protector of some kind, or she is exposed to endless annoyances. You are too young to realise your position, and you must let me care for you, just as if I were your—your brother. Don't encourage Mr. Rendu to talk to you."

Just the same lecturing voice I remember on board the *Adelaide*.

"I am not in the habit of talking to inferiors;"—and then I bite my lips. In the midst of my vexation at his interference, I am ashamed of my want of tact. What would my darling mother have thought of such a speech to a man who is almost as much my inferior as the French mate is. But Captain Brand is evidently too unsensitive to be offended.

"I am sure of it," he says cheerfully; "then it is a compact; you will trust me for the future, my dear child, and try to believe I am only seeking your real happiness in all I say or do. Now I will go."

And actually he takes both my hands in his and kisses them. I cannot prevent him; he has such a strange, rough power over me; but his look at me as he goes out of the cabin frightens me still more, it is so tender.

"I must and will get away from him;

I don't feel free while he talks to me; I believe if he were always with me he would talk me into believing he is really my husband. No; if I ever do have a husband it shall not be a big, rough, underbred tyrant of a sailor.

I shiver from head to foot, and then I break down in a childish passion of sobs and tears.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANCE.

WE were standing into a harbour lined with picturesque old houses, a great rope was thrown on board, and in a few minutes we were stationary beside the landing-place. There was such a bustle and noise everywhere that I felt giddy and sick; the smell of the harbour was worse than the noise, and men in blue smockfrocks seemed to be laying violent hands on everything, shrieking and clamouring and abusing one another in shrill feminine voices, in a patois that scarcely sounded like the French I had been taught in

Tasmania by dear old Monsieur Serret. I had been fond of the gentle old professor, and had made up my mind to like French people for his sake, but this first experience of France was discouraging and alarming. I felt inclined to cling to Captain Brand, and even when he said "My dear child," I did not feel angry.

He put me into a little carriage, and I suppose he went outside it, for there he was at the door ready to hand me out when we reached the hotel.

The hotel fronted the harbour, and at the door stood a man with a white cloth under his arm. Bowing and grinning, he led the way into a long room which smelt of cheese and tobacco-smoke; a table covered with a coarse white table-cloth reached from one end of the room to the other. Several persons sat at it, and one of these, a well-dressed old woman, was eating oysters so fast that it seemed to me she must choke; the oysters were huge, and she scooped

them out of the shell with a black handled knife, and put the point of the knife into her mouth with the oyster. Next to her sat a wizened-face man in a brown wig—he was eating cheese.

"Cheese at breakfast," I thought—"it must be breakfast, for it is only eleven o'clock; these people are savages." They stared so hard at me as I came in that I felt ashamed of my weather-stained appearance. My head was in a whirl of confusion, and I could not bear to be looked at.

Captain Brand saw my look of annoyance, and he made our guide show us into a private room. He is certainly very kind—ever since our talk in the cabin of the *Eclair*, he has kept away from me; and, indeed, I stayed chiefly below, for Monsieur Rendu, presuming, I suppose, on the encouragement I gave him on that unlucky morning, had persecuted me with his attentions when I came on deck again.

To-day I feel quite softened towards



Captain Brand; quite inclined to be friends with him. He is so very kind and gentle. When we have breakfasted he says, "We will start as soon as you are ready, and then we shall reach Château Fontaine tonight—I am anxious to see Madame La Peyre—but, remember, if you don't take to her you shall not stay with her."

I give him a grateful look, and then I glance down ruefully at my dress.

"I think," he goes on smiling, "you would like to make a little change in your dress; I had better get you a hat and cloak of some kind. I will be back directly."

I am amused at the notion of what Captain Brand's taste in dress will be, and I feel curious; but in a very short time there comes in a shop-woman with a little girl carrying a box and a morocco travelling bag. The woman makes me such a pretty courtesy and speaks with such an easy, yet respectful manner, that I think

her charming. She has a dark, ordinary face; but her hair is very nicely done, and her long, narrow dark eyes are full of expression.

She opens the box and shows me some black hats to choose from-also a very pretty dark travelling cloak; and then she fits me with black gloves. She does everything neatly and simply, and yet with such skilful quickness. "Will Mademoiselle look at herself in the glass?" she says smilingly. She sight is electrifying. I seem completely transformed from the brown, shabbylooking girl I was on board the Eclair. I even feel much more like a lady-clothes have a strange power over our estimate of "Thank you, you have made ourselves. me look very nice," I say warmly, and I feel quite grateful to Captain Brand.

She says something flattering, and I blush, and next moment—"That bag is for Mademoiselle," she says; "but pardon, Mademoiselle," and she is actually

on her knees—diligently rubbing the sea-water stains on my black silk gown with a bit of flannel, and something she has brought in a bottle. "Monsieur told me to choose for Mademoiselle all that is necessary for the toilette de nuit of a young lady, and it is possible that Mademoiselle will also wish for something else."

She opens a little box full of charming lace collars and cuffs—the sight of which is tempting, but I resist, and say, "No, thank you. I am in mourning." Captain Brand has told me that my mother gave him some money to take care of for me—but I resolve to be prudent, as it may not be a large sum, and I cannot accept any present from him.

The woman looks disappointed, but she says "Bon jour," and thanks me very politely as she goes away. I am still looking at myself, admiring my hat, and wondering at the change the shopwoman has effected, when Captain Brand comes in.

"You have forgotten these. Will you

put them in your bag?" He has some of those lovely little cuffs and collars in his great brown hand. "You will want them at Château Fontaine—there are no shops there like these Havre shops." He stops and gazes at me admiringly—"Ah, now you look like yourself again."

"He may have brown, big hands, and be rather rough," I think, "but he is good and thoughtful. I thank him graciously, and as I open the bag to put in the collars and cuffs, I see there all sorts of useful articles.

"Oh how nice! You are very kind," I begin, shyly.

"Do not think about it. I am only sorry there is not time to do better."

I fancy, from the manner he has now taken, that Captain Brand means to be my guardian—he is wise, he sees that we could never be husband and wife—I am glad he is so sensible; he is certainly very kind.

"There is not much to see here besides the shipping, and perhaps you don't care about that," he says, "but we have time for a little walk before our train starts that is, if you are willing."

So we stroll into the town. The town, except on the quay, is unpicturesque, modern-looking, with wide, commonplace streets and handsome squares. All the sights and sounds are new to me, and I almost dance with delight at all I see. Near the harbour are innumerable parrots and foreign birds in cages, making a most discordant noise. The dresses of the women, their snowy-white caps; the men in their blouses, the bright uniform of the soldiers, and the quaint cries from hawkers selling their wares, keep me in a constant flutter of excitement.

Just outside the hotel we come upon an old woman pushing a long barrow covered with plums and golden apricots. Captain Brand buys as many as he can carry, and the old woman laughs, and gives him a gourd leaf to put them in. How brown her face looks beneath her white stocking-

cap! What a network of wrinkles her eyes and mouth are set in! She does not seem very old, but when she opens her mouth I see she is toothless.

"Au révoir, mon beau Monsieur," she says. "A good appetite, Madame; the apricots are of the first quality."

I feel vexed at being called Madame; but we have come on to the pier, and I soon forget everything in looking at the people around me, and at the bathers—they are so gay and merry, and their costumes are so bright and picturesque.

"How happy everyone seems!" I say; "if all French people are as merry as these, I shall like living in France extremely."

"They are cheerful, but I am afraid they are a heartless set."

I think Captain Brand is a thorough John Bull in his notions. The view from the far end of the pier delighted me greatly; there was the open sea stretching beyond Cape La Hève in a flood of golden light, and on the left the mouth of the Seine, with Trouville in the distance, and Harfleur nestling behind a lofty wooded height; beyond, on the further side of the Seine, the blue hills of Calvados.

That was certainly a happy walk. The freshness of everything was delicious. Captain Brand walked by me saying little, feeding me with apricots (those large golden apricots were the best I ever tasted), and listening with a pleased face to my chattering remarks, for I felt too excited by the life I saw all round me to be quiet.

For the first time I was natural, and at my ease with Captain Brand. I cannot tell why I felt so changed towards him, unless the strangeness of all around me had the effect of drawing me close to my fellow-countryman—the only creature I knew. He went into a beautiful shop and bought me a lovely box of chocolate; and then he looked at his watch.

"I am afraid we must not go to the top

of the hill," he said; "the station lies down yonder. Our time is up."

He turned and pointed to the town—he looked sad, and I had grown so fearless that, if I had not had my mouth full of apricot, I think I should have asked him what was the matter.

We had only one fellow-passenger in the railway-carriage—an old white-haired gentleman with a bit of red ribbon in his button-hole. Although he did not understand English, he laughed at my bursts of admiration of the scenery we passed through. I can never forget the first part of that journey. On each side of us were orchards filled with fruit-trees, and these were gemmed with downy peaches, and gold and purple, and brown and crimson fruit, ripening fast in the glowing August sunshine; I thought of the jewelled cave of Aladdin. Aboard ship I had forgotten the time of year, but each mile of our journey



printed it in my memory—I might say burned it in, for there was a hue of burning gold over everything, from the stubble beneath the fruit trees, where barley had been newly mown, to the deep-hued lichen on the thatch of cottages peeping at rare intervals among the trees. The trees were different from any I had seen in Tasmania, so tall and graceful, and so varied in form.

For some little distance we travelled beside the Seine, and through the trees we saw a tall, graceful spire, which our fellow-traveller said was Harfleur. After this the road was less interesting. We stopped at a town which looked full of manufactories and tall chimneys, but I grew more and more tired, and took less interest in looking at the country. At last I fell asleep.

I awaken with a start. The train has stopped, our fellow-traveller has departed, and Captain Brand is standing at the open door of the carriage speaking to me. "Is this the Chateau?" I ask, sleepily; "oh! I am so glad. I am so very tired, I long to be in bed."

"No, not yet; this is Yvetôt; we have still some miles to go; come along, my dear," says the kind voice; and then he almost lifts me out of the railway-carriage and puts me into a curious-looking vehicle, on which is written, in large red letters, "Diligence-Caudebec." Captain Brand gets in after me; there is a great bumping of boxes overhead, as if the roof was coming in with them; and then, amid much shouting and strange words and cracking of a whip, we are off again—on a very straight, stony high-road.

The jolting, jogging motion sends me to sleep again very soon. When I wake, my cheek rests on something; I feel warm and comfortable.

"Awake at last," says a voice close to my ear.

I open my eyes; it has grown dusk

already, but there is light enough to show me that Captain Brand's face is very near to mine, and that I have been asleep on his shoulder. I start and struggle into a sitting position, but he has wrapped me so warmly in a great rough cloak that I feel in prison.

I try to look dignified, but I am too sleepy. I feel that just now dignity is tiresome and rather useless. I was so happy before I fell asleep. I felt like a dear little girl travelling with a simple, good-natured guardian—everything seemed settling into its right place; well, what does it matter? Captain Brand has been very kind to me all day, and if I fall against his shoulder in my sleep he cannot help it, poor man!

He keeps silent, and I look out of the window. We seem to be passing through a forest; the banks rise high on each side, crowned with trees, but we are going rapidly down a steep road that constantly winds round the hill we are descending; and now

on the right the road opens and it is lighter, and I see in front of us a grand-looking church-spire rising above a town nestling round it. There is a little winding river at the bottom of the valley beside the road.

In a few minutes we clatter down a very steep bit of road, and I see that we are in the street of the town; but it is not light enough to discover much, only the houses are very quaint-looking, with sharp-pointed gables, like those I have seen in pictures. We dash through these, come into light again, and stop suddenly. Captain Brand is out of the diligence in an instant.

"You had better wait a few minutes," he says, and I look out of the window again.

We are on a quay beside a broad silver river; there is light enough to show me how lovely it must be when one can see it better. Opposite, the bank is fringed by thin trees, which look grey in the gloom; on the left the river winds out of sight beneath a huge dark hill; and on the right is a quaint and lofty double avenue of trees, the nearest of which overshadow the diligence as it stands drawn up beside a café on the quay.

I observe that there are gay flowers in pots on the café windows, and that on a long bench in front two women are sitting at needlework, talking to a man who smokes a pipe beside them. It is a happy-looking, quiet, leisurely scene, quite new to me—for I have rarely been out of a large town. Groups of people stand about, and some empty carts and waggons with tall hoods are under the trees.

There seems to be a great deal of talk going on around the diligence, and two gentlemen who have got down from the top point out their luggage to a man in a blouse. He has a wild face and a mop of red hair, he gesticulates violently, and beckons them on past the café to an archway, on which I see printed "Hôtel de la Marine."

Captain Brand comes to the door.

"The diligence does not take us to Château Fontaine, and there is no carriage to be had. It has been market-day; all the voitures are engaged." He laughed. "I am afraid we shall have to go there in a cart. Will you get out and have something to eat?"

I feel very hungry, so I get out, and we go up the yard of the Hôtel de la Marine. There are stables on one side, and a long shed for carriages on the other. A man in a blouse stands smiling and bowing, and I believe he is the master. A tall, dark-faced, grim-looking woman beside him receives us very graciously, and we go upstairs into the salle-à-manger. She seems disappointed when Captain Brand says we do not want rooms, only something to eat. She says,

"I thought Monsieur and Madame had come for the Barre—many travellers come for the Barre." And then she goes away, and our dinner soon comes.



I cannot eat much, I am so delighted with the view of the river from the large open windows that I can hardly look at anything else. The moon has risen, and although her reflection does not reach the river, the effect is exquisite. There is not much light yet in the moon, for the sky is still full of colour. Near the dark hills, and just before the river sweeps round so grandly out of sight, it is darkolive; but here, in front, it is a pale yellow, rose-tinted by the warm clouds overhead, which tell of a glorious sunset. Across the water the tall poplars look darker now, and throw a deep shadow into the water below them. I am sorry when the girl who has been waiting on us-a pale, dark-eyed, bustling creature, who seems to fly up and down the stairs—opens the glass door of the salle with a great slam, and says,

"Monsieur et Madame, the voiture is ready."

When we get to the voiture, which is a cart after all, there is a chair placed beside it. I mount on this and scramble in; but it is rather awkward, for the cart has such high sides. There is a bench across with a cushion, and a chair in front for the driver. Captain Brand places me carefully in one corner, so that I shall not sit next to the driver. I can hardly see him, but he is a little man, shrill-voiced, and smells strongly of onions. Captain Brand puts the cloak carefully round me; he is so very kind and gentle I cannot feel cross with him.

"Thank you so much," I whisper; "you have been very kind to me all day."

Oh, how I wish I had held my tongue! I feel his arm going round the cloak in which he has wrapped me.

"God bless you, my darling, for saying so!"

But he does not keep his arm round me, and he begins to speak at once to the driver. So, after a bit, my terror subsides, and Capt. Brand's bad French amuses me.

The road soon becomes so interesting that I forget everything in looking at it. It gets lighter, for the moon has risen up high; and there are lofty cliffs on the right, wooded in parts, but with white limestone crags showing here and there as the moonlight falls on them. On the left is a monotonous row of pollard willows, but the foliage is so light, and they are planted so widely apart, that through the stems I see the broad river flowing along beside us. A low-lying meadow comes between the trees and the river, and on this are fruit-trees reaching to the water's edge.

The moon has soon risen so high that her reflection falls broadly across the water, partly in an unbroken silver band, and then in waving circlets of light. As the current disturbs the smooth surface, these circlets spread more widely, for I can feel that the wind is rising.

"V'là la Seine, M'sieur et Dame," our driver squeals, "v'là la Barre, qui va arriver."

I do not think Captain Brand understands the shrill squeak, but I long to ask what the Barre is.

Suddenly the road widens, and curves round so that the river forms a bay; but the moonlight only glimmers on it now. A hazy bank of clouds has mounted up to the moon, and every now and then a fragment of dark vapour passes across her face. We turn sharply as we reach the further corner of the bay, and I cry out with delight. On the right there is a huge opening in the white rock, which looks like a gloomy cave, with festoons of ivy, or some other plant, hanging across its mouth; and on the roadside, bending towards the river, as if some mystic spell drew them there, are about twenty tall, slender, silver birch-trees, waving their wan foliage to the fast-rising storm. The black mass of



vapour flings itself suddenly over the moon, and the light comes through in ghastly, partial fragments; now falling on the pale birch-stems, making them yet more weird and mysterious, now on the white limestone crags.

Suddenly an owl flits across the road, cries out sharply, and vanishes into the cave. I shiver, and am glad when the trees become higher and thicker between the road and the river—we seem more sheltered in the darkness.

All at once, from far off in the direction we are following, comes a hoarse murmur. We have been going up hill for some time, and this sound seems to rise towards us. Each moment it grows louder and louder, till it becomes a tumultuous foaming noise, like that of a rushing torrent. Amid the din there are faint human voices calling to one another—I think of Undine's uncle in pursuit of Hildebrand—but suddenly the noise, for one instant, grows deafening,

and then the furious water seems to fling itself upwards with one mighty leap, and falls thundering on the rocks below. Captain Brand looks at the driver.

- "What's that?" he says, anxiously.
- "Ca, c'est la Barre—c'est fini, M'sieur et Dame."
- "Qu'est-ce que c'est la Barre?" the Captain asks, and I listen eagerly for the answer.

The driver stares, and shrugs his shoulders.

"C'est le flot, v'là tout; ça vient demain tout de même"—and then he lashes out at his horses, and settles his pipe in his mouth.

"Nous v'là arrivés," he says presently, and he drives far more rapidly between a row of small houses which has sprung up on one side, and a high dead wall on the other; then comes a sudden turn, and we begin to climb slowly a very steep ascent on the right. "V'là le château;" our driver points up with his whip, as if Château Fontaine lay skywards; but it is too

dark to see far ahead, and, besides, everything has put on the same level dim tint, except indeed the white road which mounts straight in front.

"V'là l'église," squeaks the driver. I lean forward, and make out a spire behind a group of cottages, and a few steps further on—where the cottages stand apart, so as to leave a wide opening—a low wall with a tall cross set just within it; I see that our driver pulls off his cap as we pass this.

Five minutes more of slow climbing—during which his cart creaks horribly—and we stop. The driver gets down and opens a gate: it seems to be a high iron one as it swings back; then he makes an indescribable sound, and the horse moves on.

"I had best call the concierge to guide Monsieur et Madame," the driver says. "It will take a long time to get the cart to the house, and besides it is too steep for the horse; by the footpath Monsieur arrives in Eve minutes." He drives on a few paces, and then scrambles down again, and leaves us under the trees. They seem very lofty trees, they are swaying about in the boisterous wind, and there is the sound of a waterfall not far off. I feel interested and excited, and wish there was more light. Captain Brand has kept silent so long that I grow impatient.

"Shall I get down," I say, "so as to be ready when he comes back?"

Captain Brand must surely have been asleep, he gives such a start at my voice.

"Wait an instant;" and then he sits silent. "Yes, here he comes."

He gets down, and holds out his arms for me. I wish he would let me have a chair instead, and I hesitate.

"Come," he says, and he seems to take me in his arms in an instant.

I almost fall in scrambling down, I am so anxious to get away from him.

We are in a park full of very large



lofty trees. A man is standing beside our driver with a curious horn lantern in his hand—it has a conical top, like those which one sees in pictures. The man holds this up to Captain Brand's face, and I see his own—such a brown, wrinkled, smooth-skinned old face, it puts me in mind of a walnut-shell with two black slits for eyes, and a slit of no colour but the original division of the walnut-shells for a mouth. His nose seems to lie flat on his face. The only obtrusive thing about him is a pair of round gold rings in his great flapping ears.

I suppose he wishes us good evening, but it sounds to me like—

"Ah ça, ah ça, M'sieur et Dame,—soyez les bienvenus!"

Captain Brand and the driver have a little talk, the bags are taken out of the cart and given to the concierge, and then the cart drives away, and we begin to follow our friend with the earrings.

"You had better take my hand," said the Captain, "this road is too rough for you."

But I have accepted help enough from him. "Oh, no; thank you, I can manage," and I walk on, trying to widen the distance between us.

We go up a winding arrow path, with tall skinny-looking trees on each side, with lower bushes and seemingly shrubs in front of them; we are sheltered from the wind here, but the road is so uneven and stony that my ankles soon begin to twist.

A sharper twist this time, and I fall down on my face. In an instant I am raised up.

"Are you hurt, my child?" I can feel that he trembles while he holds me, and his voice has an accent of terror.

What an old goose he is! I laugh out—
"Oh, no, thank you, I am not hurt; but
perhaps I had better take your arm."

I like this better than letting him hold my hand in his. I don't mean to give him a chance of kissing my hand again; but, indeed, I believe he has changed his mind, and I may feel at my ease. His manner is much more like a father's than a lover's. After all, I am glad he is here. I am sure to like Madame La Peyre, but it would have been impossible to make this journey alone and introduce myself at Château Fontaine.

Captain Brand is thinking, too, I suppose, or the increasing steepness of the winding-path takes away his breath. He does not speak till the bobbing light in front stands still, a little way above us. We follow up some steps on to a level space.

Then comes a great barking of dogs, and a rattling as if a chain were being unfastened, and then light gleams out of a large open doorway at the top of some steps, and I see we are on a broad terrace in front of a large house.

"Stay here a moment," and Captain

The same alone with the walnutcollantern. I feel nervous when
tain Brand's tall figure disappear
that fills the doorway. I begin
and make out what sort of a place
the fontaine is.

seem to be two rows of narrow across the long front, and over a very high roof only standing back way, with two rows of projecting dows with peaked tops coming out of it. mve never seen windows like these, and as was I can make out I think them very picuresque. The terrace goes straight along the front of the house, and there do not seem to be trees beyond it, and it is much lighter than it was down below. I cannot see any attempt at a carriage sweep or garden. The wooded hill we have been climbing lies just behind us, and there is a grassed descent on each side, which looks very steep indeed. These people are not much, I think—they do not even keep a

carriage. It will be very dull; I shall be buried alive, I am afraid.

But here comes Captain Brand. He is quiet again now. All his expansive manner has left him.

"Madame La Peyre is from home at present, Gertrude, but her brother, an old Abbé, will be very happy to see you. Will you come this way?"

A sudden chill falls on my anticipations—I feel shy and miserable. I follow through the hall, which is so dark and slippery that I nearly fall again, and up a very short, wide, black staircase, also very slippery. This is lighter, for the man who opened the door has taken the light from the sconce in the hall and is holding it over the quaint twisted balusters. We go up some more shallow, broad stairs, along a gallery with a great window in it, turn a corner, then along another gallery to an open door at the end.

An old gentleman in a long black dress

stands near the door—he makes me a low bow.

"Mademoiselle is very welcome to Château Fontaine, and I must ask her to accept, me as her host in the absence of my sister, Madame La Peyre."

Then he shakes hands with me with as much reverence as if I were the queen, and leads me up to the fireplace.

There is a wood fire on the wide, barelooking hearth, and the strangeness, I suppose, has made me feel chilly, or I am shyly glad of something to do. I bend over the fire and warm my hands.

"Mademoiselle is cold," says the Abbé; in a minute I hear a bell ring, and the man who showed us upstairs comes in.

I had not seen him clearly before, but some wax candles are burning on a table near the door, and I look at him.

He has a young, half-finished face, very little hair on his head, and a receding chin; his coat is too large and too loose, his



trowsers too short and narrow—he seems not to belong to his clothes.

"Mathieu," says Monsieur l'Abbé, in the same suave voice in which he spoke to me, "some hot chocolate at once, and then tell Rosalie she is wanted."

The chocolate does not come directly, and I sit looking at the fire, too timid to look at the Abbé.

"I remember Madame Stewart," says the suave voice, "but she was not Madame Stewart when I saw her; she was young, and her name was Tyrell, and her mother was Lady Susan Tyrell."

I give the Abbé a friendly nod, and look up at him; and as I look I see that he is not so very old, and that he is very handsome. I think what lovely grey hair he has, and what a pity it is all shaved off the top of his head; and then another door opens in the dark, out-of-sight part of the room. It is so large a room that the fire and the two wax candles only light up our

corner of it; and this is comfortably shut in by some huge black and gold screens. so that the rest of the great rambling place is invisible. I look at Captain Brand; he is frowning just as he frowned at Monsieur Rendu on board the Eclair. But footsteps are coming across the parquet behind the screens; there is no carpet on the floor; and the next minute a gentleman comes round from behind the screen against which I sit. Our eyes meet, and seem fascinatedsurely I have seen this face in my dreams; dark intense eyes—a white forehead with brown shining hair clustering in curls over it; a red-lipped mouth, and a long straight nose. He is not very tall, but he is graceful and well-made, and I notice as he comes into the light how small and white his hands are. I have seen engravings from Vandyck, and he is like a Vandvck portrait.

"Ah! my pupil," says the Abbé; "I had forgotten; I must present you to Made-



moiselle Stewart and to her guardian, Monsieur le Capitaine Brand. This, Mademoiselle, is my pupil, Monsieur le Comte de Vaucresson."

The new-comer has not taken his eyes from my face, and I feel I am blushing under his intense gaze. I have begun to make a low curtsey in answer to his deep reverential bow, but I believe my curtsey gets lower at the mention of his title. A glow of pleasure comes over me, and then a quick feeling of shame that this highborn gentleman should find me in the companionship of a man like Captain Brand.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT CHATEAU FONTAINE.

Madame La Peyre's absence. After the first few moments I had felt so perfectly sure of getting on well with that mild-voiced, charming Abbé; but now, without any cause or warning, I suddenly lost all self-possession. I felt like a shy school-girl. Every time I looked up, those glowing dark eyes met mine in a way that told me they never left me. If I had doubted this fact, Captain Brand's face would have confirmed it; he looked so vexed and troubled. When I saw this I

felt more at ease. "Jealous old crosspatch," I thought, and all my naughty feelings towards him came back.

Mathieu came in presently, carrying a silver salver with a chocolate pot, a cream jug, and a sugar basket in antique silver, and there were two quaint cups and saucers. The Vicomte went forward and met him half-way; he poured out my chocolate and handed it to me with charming grace. How delicious that cup of chocolate was!

"How well he must dance," I thought; and then I ventured a little look up again. I could not help glancing mischievously at Captain Brand. "I don't fancy he ever danced in his life, poor old thing." He was not looking at me; he was studying the face of Monsieur de Vaucresson with a very displeased look. "He is very rude to stare so," and then I could not help laughing at my own perverseness.

A tap at the door, and the Abbé said

"Come in." There came in a woman, short and stout in figure, neither old nor young, freckled and sandy-haired, with small light eyes, wide apart. She wore a cap with a high pointed crown and wings, and a muslin bow, tied in front. She had on a short, dark blue skirt, and a black stuff jacket, the front hidden by the square bib of her brown apron. The Abbé asked if the rooms were ready, and then he turned to me.

"Mademoiselle is tired, I am sure."

"Yes, Monsieur, she must be tired." I did not think Captain Brand could speak so quickly. "She will be glad to go to bed."

I tried to say I was not tired, but the Abbé went on before I could get out my words.

"Yes, yes, no doubt; and, Rosalie, you will see that Mademoiselle has everything she can require. Good night, Mademoiselle, I have the honour to wish you a good sleep."

He took my hand in his and led me to the door before Captain Brand had time to wish me good night. Monsieur de Vaucresson, however, had reached the door before we did, and held it open with another graceful bow, but he did not seem to expect me to shake hands. I followed the short, sturdy Frenchwoman along the slippery gallery, in a very discontented temper.

"The Abbé and Captain Brand are a pair of old busy-bodies. Why should I be sent to bed just as the evening was beginning, as if I was a little girl? I am not tired. I only meant to come up and make myself tidy, and then go down and talk to Monsieur le Comte. How delightful that he lives here!" I felt my cheeks flush. "Oh! how I wish to-morrow were come!"

At home I had read in English novels descriptions of French châteaux, and it seemed to me that, so far, all I had seen had been fairly pictured forth; but I felt disappointed when Rosalie opened a door in the



gallery, and led the way up a narrow corkscrew staircase, so warped and uneven that I nearly fell down the stone steps.

"Mademoiselle must take the cord." Rosalie looked over her shoulder, and held up the brass lamp she carried; then I saw a rope fastened against the outside wall, but so dirty-looking that I preferred to stumble on without its help. Presently we emerged into a long gallery overlooking the great square staircase by which we had reached the drawing-room. I looked down and saw Mathieu far below, sitting asleep on the stairs; a feeble lamp was going out beside him, and the wind was moaning dismally up the great square opening.

Rosalie looked down at Mathieu. "Paresseux, vaurien," she muttered.

I began to feel low-spirited and gloomy; I seemed so far away from everyone. Just then Rosalie stopped before a door and opened it.

"The bed-room of Mademoiselle;" she



curtseyed, and then went in and lit another brass lamp, which stood on a table in the room.

I looked round in surprise; this was not a bit like the bedrooms I had read about; it had a high ceiling which sloped, and I saw that the windows had broad seats in them; the walls were whitewashed; on one of them was a bas-relief of horses and dogs, also whitewashed; there was no carpet on the floor, and in front of the fireplace there stood a small stove; but I could see that there was a glowing fire in this, and the room felt warm and comfortable: there was a French bedstead without any hangings; a dark-looking table, on which Rosalie had set down the lamp; and behind this, fixed against the wall, a looking-glass, made up of square and diamond-shaped bits of glass leaded together; two chairs, covered with dull brown leather, on one of them a very small jug and basin, and towel; no bath, no window-curtains, no toilet-cover, not a luxury of any kind.

"Does Mademoiselle require anything else?" Rosalie held her lamp near my face, with a self-satisfied look on her own.

I thought the question very unnecessary; it seemed to me that I wanted everything, but something in her face stayed me from asking for anything.

"I want some hot water, and my bag." Rosalie shrugged her shoulders.

"Ah, for the bag, yes, Mathieu shall bring it to Mademoiselle directly; but for the hot water, it is different; the last was used for the chocolate, and the fire is out, and Mademoiselle will have to wait so long before the water will be hot.

There was a look of sly obstinacy in Rosalie's small light eyes, peering at me through pale lashes.

"Very well," I said, and I turned away from her.

"Bon soir, Mam'selle; dormez bien."

I listened to the pattering of her feet on the stairs, and then I felt very lonely. It was a comfort when, a few minutes after, Mathieu's shrill voice asked through the keyhole if he might come in with my bag; but he set it down, and was gone again in an instant. I felt very miserable.

"I can't go to bed, there's not even a bolt to the door; and that is not a keyhole, only a hole; there is no lock to the door. Oh, I shall be frightened to death before morning!"

I wrapped my cloak round me, and sat down close to the stove. I could not make up my mind to undress and go to bed; but I was so tired that I soon began to nod in my chair. I seemed to be downstairs talking to the Comte, and all at once I started awake; a dull, lumbering sound was growing more and more distinct. I stood up, listening in such terror that my hair was lifted from my forehead—the heavy tread was coming near, nearer, till it stopped at my door.

"Gertrude, are you asleep?"

I did not think I could ever have been so glad to hear Captain Brand's voice. I opened the door at once.

"I have not been to bed; I don't know what to do, I am so frightened at being up here all alone." And then I stopped, ashamed of my cowardice.

"I don't wonder you feel timid;" he spoke very gently. "I thought, perhaps, you would be frightened in this lonely place, and I asked the Abbé to let me have the room next yours. You will go to bed and sleep now, won't you, my dear child? You look quite worn out. Remember I am close by. Good night."

He held my hand lingeringly, and looked at me very kindly, but I drew it quickly away. I never even said "Thank you;" I only gaped. "I am so sleepy; good night." And I shut the door before he turned to go into his room.

"He is very good-natured, and I am ungracious," I thought reproachfully. "He

is very like a great, affectionate old dog; it is comfortable to feel he is so near."

And then I got into bed as fast as I could—and dreamed of Monsieur de Vaucresson.

CHAPTER IX.

LE COMTE DE VAUCRESSON.

WAS wakened by Rosalie. She stood by my bedside with a cup of coffee in her hand.

"Is it very late?" I spoke in English.

She laughed and shook her head. "No Engleesh"—then in French, "It is eight o'clock, Mam'selle."

I sent her away and began to dress. I took extra pains with my hair. In those days I had an abundance of long, dark, very dark hair, with a bright auburn tinge underneath where it waved off my temples.

and yet when I had woven it into glossy dark plaits round my head, I looked at myself in the glass and sighed.

"Ah, how different I look from Monsieur de Vaucresson! He cannot care for me when he is so beautiful."

I had only a clear brown skin; my black eyebrows were straight and thick; my nose was rather inclined to turn up at the end, and my upper lip curved up too. I had a little mouth, I knew that, and my lips were very red; but I had such great staring dark eyes, of what colour I never could tell. In the morning they looked a greenish grey; in the evening they were dark brown. I was not fond of my own eyes, they so often got me into trouble. Jane, my eldest sister, was always scolding me for "throwing my eyes at people," as she called it.

I took great pains in dressing myself this morning. I brushed my gown with a dear little brush I found in my bag, and fastened on one of the pretty lace collars. "They are too good to wear in the morning, but then I have nothing else."

At last I was ready, and after some wandering I found my way to the room we were in last night. It was empty, and I did not know where to go. There were two doors at each end of the vast room. It looked dismal in the morning light—the great space of bare polished floor, with only a few small rugs in front of the sofas and easy-chairs; the scarcity of furniture; the discoloured ceiling-once painted in fresco, but now a confusion of sky and distorted figures and cornucopias; the dark panelled walls, gave a desolate, lonely gloom to the place I had thought so cozy over night. Even the folding screens, which had shone in the firelight, now looked dull and cracked, and the gold and red goblins on them were hideous.

"I must try to find out where they are breakfasting." I was, of course, quite un-



used to French customs, and I thought the Abbé had sent me up a cup of coffee from the breakfast-table. I tried the doors on the fireplace side of the room; both were fastened, and so was that on the furthest side, nearest the door by which I had entered. But the fourth door opened at once; there was a huge screen in front of it; I passed round this screen, and found myself close to Monsieur de Vaucresson. He was taking a book from a shelf, for the room I had got into was surrounded by book-shelves, which reached from the floor to the ceiling; he started as much as I did, but he recovered himself at once.

"Bon jour, Mademoiselle." How charmingly he bowed, but then he stared at me so intently that I was obliged to look down. I saw this morning that he was older than I thought him last night.

"I want to find the breakfast-room; I believe I am very late."

He smiled and pointed to a white china

clock on a little black shelf, covered with quaint plates and cups.

"On the contrary, Mademoiselle is an early riser. The breakfast here is not served till twelve o'clock. Will Mademoiselle sit down and wait here, or would she prefer to walk in the garden?"

"Is there a garden? How delightful! If Monsieur will tell me how to find it, I should like to go there."

He laughed and shook his head.

"To go by the public way would fatigue Mademoiselle; one has to traverse the park to arrive at the gardens; and the private way would be too difficult to find alone. Mademoiselle must therefore permit me to guide her."

"Thank you," I said, indifferently, "I should like to go, if you have time;" and I looked at the books and papers on the table.

He laughed, gathered up the papers in a heap, and took up a hat from beside them.

"There is no lack of time here; I can-

not find occupation enough; besides, I do not study on Sunday. The Abbé has gone to mass. I shall be delighted to take a walk with Mademoiselle."

I had quite forgotten it was Sunday. Monsieur de Vaucresson turned to the other end of the long narrow room, and I wondered how he was going to get out, for I saw on all sides only shelves filled with books. There was one stained glass window, and opposite this a fireplace, over which were the black shelves filled with curiosities, which I had previously noticed. Monsieur de Vaucresson went on to the end of the room, opposite the door by which I had come in. took a book from one of the shelves, and the shelves swung back opening a door, where just before I had seen only books.

"If Mademoiselle gives permission, I will lead the way."

He looked round to see if I followed, and then went down a twisting staircase, exactly like that I had gone up on the previous night, except that instead of the dirty rope there was a twisted red cord.

"This is delightful," I said to myself, "as good as the Arabian nights. Captain Brand will not be able to find me."

At first the staircase was lighted by little slits in the walls, but these left off as we got lower; and in the pitchy darkness I got giddy and frightened; I stood still at last and clung to the cord.

"Will Mademoiselle give me her hand?" I did not think the Comte was so close beside me. "If one turns giddy here there is a great danger of falling, and these steps we are coming to are broken and unsafe."

He found my hand and held it firmly in his, and we slowly descended. At last he stood still, and I heard he was unlocking a door. I was very glad to be in sunlight again; there was a damp unwholesome atmosphere in that staircase. But it was not a garden we had reached. It was a

paved yard, with some hens and chickens running about, and amongst these, grunting and grubbing between the stones, and in stray corners, were some of the longestlegged, dirtiest pigs I had ever seen.

I looked at Monsieur de Vaucresson, "But—— I don't call this a garden," and then, for I felt shy of my French, "Can you speak English?"

"No, and even if I could I would not give up the pleasure of listening to you, Mademoiselle. You cannot think how charmingly you speak our language." And then he went on with a heap of graceful compliments, while he stood leaning against the door which he had locked. I began to wish myself upstairs again.

"You promised to show me the garden; this is surely not the garden?" I said.

He bowed, but he looked vexed.

"Mademoiselle is anxious to be rid of a troublesome companion."

I did not exactly want him to go, but



certainly I did not mean to let him know I cared for him to stay. I began to think he was conceited.

- "I never said so," and I looked mischievously at him.
- "Ah! but, Mademoiselle, it is not only by words that one speaks."
- "Perhaps not in France, but in England we always say what we mean."

He smiled.

"Then Mademoiselle will perhaps tell me in words whether she wishes me to stay with her."

I felt caught in a trap, but the Comte was not laughing at all; he looked imploring.

"We will settle about that when we really reach the garden," and I walked across the yard. No, I will not be managed by Monsieur de Vaucresson, or by Captain Brand either; I will manage myself. I know, if I give way ever so little, how people can influence me.

He followed me across the yard, and opened a high black gate at the farther end of it. Two of those hideous pigs tried to squeeze through the gate with me, but he drove them back.

"Please don't beat them so hard," I said.

He only laughed—cruelly I thought.

- "Pigs and peasants understand best through their hides, Mademoiselle; they must feel the word of command before they can hear it."
- "We don't think so among English people."
- "Mademoiselle must make excuse for my French education." He smiled very sweetly.

This black gate led us into a cabbage garden; cabbages of all shapes and sizes were growing thickly together. There was nothing else except, in one corner of spare ground, a plot of sweet-smelling herbs, bordered with lavender, and on the

sunny side of the wall which surrounded the garden, apricot trees and tomatoes between them.

"Is this the garden?" I felt horribly disappointed, and I must have looked disappointed too.

"I had begun to think Mademoiselle was an angel, but I see she is human—she is impatient. No, Mademoiselle, there is a flower-garden, and we will go and find it."

He was laughing at me, and I looked grave directly.

"I do not think I can stay any longer, Monsieur l'Abbé, and Captain Brand may be looking for me."

Monsieur de Vaucresson fixed his eyes on mine with such a keen look of inquiry that I felt puzzled.

"But it is not possible that the person I have seen last night has any authority over Mademoiselle."

I felt vexed and confused. If the Comte only knew that I was actually VOL. I.

married to this man he spoke of in such a slighting voice! But I am not really married—at least, I mean to break through this absurd idea and go back to my father. No one shall ever know that secret; there is only one living witness—Mr. Howard, and we left him ill on board the *Eclair*; he said he was going to the south of England, and perhaps we shall never hear of him again.

"Captain Brand has no authority over me," I said proudly, "I don't think men ever rule women. Captain Brand is my fellow-traveller; he has very kindly come, at much inconvenience, out of his way to bring me here, so I am bound to be civil to him."

This was true, for I knew how anxious the Captain was to report the loss of the Adelaide, and how ill he could spare the time he had bestowed on me.

Monsieur de Vaucresson smiled, and 'then he went on quickly in front and opened a door in the wall. This door was fixed partly in the wall, partly in a yew hedge on the other side of it, and was half hidden by a plot of huge sunflowers which held themselves up to the sunshine overhead like bronze and golden shields.

"Voilà, Mademoiselle," and he stood aside to let me pass in.

CHAPTER X.

I FIND A FRIEND.

WE are in a small garden, filled with beds of the most formal shape; there is a sundial in the middle, and the paths are made of broken slate. A clipped yew hedge shuts the garden in all round, except just in front.

There is an opening here, and I look down a sheer descent of nearly a hundred feet. It is thickly clothed with hazel bushes. At the bottom is a narrow winding river, so narrow that it is more like a brook. The opposite side of the valley is not quite so steep as where we stand; it is grassed, but there are groups of large forest trees at intervals. Among the trees are old grey statues, and the grassed bank is in ridges, as if there had once been terraces one above another. Lower down to the right the river turns abruptly, and goes out of sight behind the hill on which we stand, and the tall trees which meet across it just where it disappears. Looking down the stream to the left I see a bridge, a fanciful modern construction of twisted wood.

"The view is very pretty, but why is not the garden joined to the house?"

"The house was very much larger," he says, "and it may have reached to this spot, I fancy. Two-thirds of it were destroyed in the Revolution, and the Abbé has told me that there were terraces on this side of the river also, but we can soon reach the other side, unless you like the river best."

Monsieur de Vaucresson points to the bridge, and I see a little boat moored close beside it. The bridge lies in deep shadow, for there are trees here also, and the sun has not yet risen above the steep bank behind these; in the hazy morning light I did not at first see the boat. I clap my hands with delight.

"Oh, yes, the river. I like boating better than anything in the world, and I have had very little in my life."

"We will go in the boat, then," says Monsieur de Vaucresson, and he goes on in front. I begin to think I am rather wild to roam about without a hat, so I tie my handkerchief over my head.

After a bit the path slopes down rapidly amongst the hazel bushes, and we soon reach the bridge. The Comte turns and takes my hand. "Ah, how charming is mademoiselle in gipsy costume!" He guides me down some rough steps with the most devoted care, and then places me in the little boat, jumps in himself, and pushes it off with a skill which I think wonderful.

Monsieur de Vaucresson lets the boat drift down stream till we come to the turn; the water is broader and deeper here, but he only takes one scull, and he sits looking at me.

It is not natural to me to be serious; I always find something to laugh about, even in disasters, and these last few weeks of sadness have burdened my spirits grievously. Something in the fresh morning air, or the presence of a young companion, makes me feel joyous and happy as I have not felt since I said good-bye to my father and my sisters in Van Diemen's Land.

I begin to laugh. He flushes slightly.

- "Why does mademoiselle laugh? Is it that my way of rowing is different from that which she has seen in England?" he says, in a vexed voice.
- "I always laugh when I am happy; and you have not begun to row, and I have not been in England since I was four years old."

He looks interested.

"But Mademoiselle is surely English?"

"Yes, but I have lived in Tasmania. I was coming home to live in England, and my mother died on board ship."

I feel very sad as I say this. I stop, for the tears are running down my cheeks, and a great lump has come into my throat; he looks troubled.

"Ah, mon Dieu! but it is sad—horribly sad. Is mademoiselle, then, travelling to England alone?"

He looks shocked now as well as troubled.

"I came here to find Madame La Peyre, an old friend of my mother's; but I am not alone—I have Captain Brand, the captain of the ship I travelled in, to take care of me."

I blush, for I am not speaking the whole truth, and yet how can I say I am married to Captain Brand? for it seems to me the Comte must look down upon him. His

next words make me glad I have been so careful.

"Mademoiselle must forgive me, but it seems strange to see her in companionship with one who seems such an unpolished person. Mademoiselle will pardon me. I am not used to Englishmen; are they all like this Capitaine?"

"Oh! no, no," I laugh. "He is not an English gentleman; he is a very good man, but he is only the captain of the ship we sailed in; I did not know him before." And then my cheeks burn hotly; I recall the captain's kindness and thoughtful care, and I am heartily ashamed of my own pride.

The Comte's lip curls.

"Oh! indeed. I am grieved that mademoiselle has had to travel with so unsuitable a guardian; but now she is free of him, mademoiselle will stay here till Madame La Peyre comes back."

This is a new idea—a delightful one; I had feared we should have to set out in a

few days to find Madame La Peyre in her Devonshire home, but of course this is a better plan. I will stay here and release Captain Brand from his care of me. An uneasy twinge about his power of control comes to me, and then I look up in my companion's face and take courage. I shall write to my father to-day, and until I get his answer I shall refuse to submit to Captain Brand. I am so silent settling this that the Comte gets impatient.

"You have not fulfilled your promise, mademoiselle." I am glad he has left off talking to me in the third person; it makes me feel so stiff and far off. "You said you would tell me in words whether you wished me to stay with you."

He smiles, and looks as if he is sure of my answer.

"That is nonsense. How can I say anything else? I dare say you can't swim, if I say No and you leave me, you must drown."



I laugh. He stands up in the boat in an instant. "I am ready to take the risk."

"Please sit down." I laugh at his serious face. "I can't bear the boat to rock."

He sits down.

"Mademoiselle, I have not yet decided whether English ladies say what they mean any more than French ones do."

He is laughing at me; I know that, though he keeps a grave face.

- "Do you know many French ladies?"
- "Old ladies, yes; young ladies, no. Mademoiselle, when I came into the room last night, and saw you, I felt in heaven." He put his hand on his heart.
- "Did you, really? How does it feel in heaven? But have you not any sisters or cousins?"

I look at him, and he looks at me, and we both burst out laughing. I don't know why we laugh. I suppose we both feel so happy. It is delightful drifting along under the shade of the trees, so tall that the water is a blue-green from their reflection; the golden sunshine overhead finds its way down in scattered fragments through the branches, spangling now the tiny white blossoms on the water, now the gauzy wings of a dragon-fly that keeps on darting in sharp angles across the stream.

"Yes, I have sisters and cousins, but they are all in convents, being taught by the nuns, and the chief thing they learn is that they must not be friends with their brothers or cousins. I cannot tell you how much I want a friend like you."

"Do you?" and then we look at each other again, and I laugh.

"Ah! it is nothing to you; you have plenty of friends, Mademoiselle."

He speaks quite sadly and hopelessly; poor fellow, if he could know how ready I am for his friendship!

"I had plenty of friends at home," and then I sigh—I hope at my own falsehood, for I do not think I left one real friend



behind me, except a poor old woman who was once my nurse.

The Comte takes the sculls, and we go on again more rapidly. How well he rows! I do not think he could do anything awkwardly.

"Mademoiselle"—he holds both sculls in one of his delicate hands, and it looks too small to grasp them; with the other he pushes the curls off his white forehead—"you are going to stay for some time with Madame La Peyre, is it not so? We shall have to live under the same roof perhaps for a year. Will it not be better to be friends?"

"I did not know we were enemies, but if you wish to quarrel, I am ready."

"You are hard on me; but how can you be my friend when I do not even know your name."

"That is not my fault; you have not asked me for my name, and young girls are not usually labelled." I laugh at him again—I hope it is not rude, but I cannot

help laughing; he sits there looking so sentimental. "I do know yours, and, Monsieur de Vaucresson, we are drifting into a great willow-tree."

He begins to scull again, but he has to back several strokes before we are extricated, the willow-tree stretches so far across the water.

"You do not know my whole name—I am Eugène Adolphe Théodore Marie Bénoit Louis Félix de Vaucresson."

I bow reverently.

"How very charming; do you know I feel quite frightened at such a magnificent array. Why, I have only two silly little names—I am Gertrude Lucy Stewart." For the first time, as I say the surname, the thought comes to me, is it my name any longer? He sculls on again rapidly.

"Ah! thank you, a thousand times; but yours are simple and beautiful names. Will you tell me your age, as well as your name? I am twenty." "No older? I thought you were at least twenty-five. Oh! I am so glad. I like you much better now. You are only four years older than I am, and you know that a woman of the same age is always older than a man, so that we are about equal. But are you sure you are only twenty?"

I look doubtfully at his full-grown moustache.

"I could not deceive Mademoiselle." He speaks in his formal manner again. Then he laughs, jumps up in the boat, and begins pushing it in shore. "We must land now, I think; which may I call you, Mademoiselle, Gertrude or Lucie; in France, friends do not call each other Monsieur or Mademoiselle."

"Don't they? But are you sure?" The idea is pleasant, only I wonder for a moment what Jane would think of such familiarity. How absurd; did I not say just now no one should control me but myself. I am quite old enough to know right

from wrong. "Well, then, if you call me Gertrude, by which of your seven names shall I call you?"

"By whichever you please." He looks so delighted that I almost repent my confidence. "The Abbé calls me Eugène."

"Then I will call you Eugène; and now please let me get out." The boat is struggling against the forced position in which he holds it, rocking and wriggling most uncomfortably.

I have been so interested in our talk in these last minutes that I have not had eyes for anything but the Comte. I see now that we have circled round the base of the lofty height on which the château stands, and have left it behind us. We are now in the valley facing the gate by which we came in last night, and on the park side the bank is flat and level with the water.

"We cannot get any farther, the stream is so shallow, and Mathieu, the old con-



cierge"—he points to a cottage close by—
"would come after us to warn us."

He holds out his hand to help me, but when I put mine in it, he holds my fingers fast instead of helping me out.

"Gertrude,"—he says my name in such a pretty broken way—"in England, I believe, you shake hands on friendship?"

"Yes," and then I look down—he is staring so intently at me.

He presses my hand tightly. "In France, when we take a woman's hand we kiss it." And he kisses it before I can pull it away.

I feel that my face is burning. I push past Eugène, and jump on land, my heart throbbing fast. The river flows along here like a luminous green thread, level with the swampy grass. I run along under the tall gloomy trees, till all at once—I run nearly into Captain Brand's arms. I look up startled and ashamed, there is a perfect thunder-cloud

on his face, he does not even say "Good morning."

"We are late for breakfast, are we not?" I say as coolly as I can. "Please ask the Abbé not to wait, Captain Brand; I shall soon be ready." And then I run along the path which I see must lead back to the house.

CHAPTER XI.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE path went on over the damp grass, shadowed by groups of trees. As I looked up at them, there was no escape from the all-pervading green atmosphere. In front of the river I saw the little cottage of the concierge, and this also had green doors and green shutters, in staring contrast to its white-washed walls. My path lost itself presently in the thick grass; on the right I saw a carriage drive disappearing round the densely-wooded hill which rose perpendicularly in front of me; on the left was the same steep hill, but there were no trees—it was grassed up to

the summit. I remembered how the path through the trees had turned and twisted last night, and I thought the steep straight climb on the left would be quickest; but I had not realised its steepness. It took me a long time to climb, and I was breathless by the time I reached the top. Mathieu stood on the terrace on the look-out.

"Mamzelle, breakfast waits." He said this in his shrillest voice, and suddenly vanished.

"Mathieu," I shrieked in a despairing voice, "but where is the breakfast?"

I expected that Captain Brand would have followed me closely, and I want to be safe under that dear Abbé's wing before he appears. I know I can make that dear old gentleman do all I want.

Mathieu does not answer; he is either deaf or shy. I run into the house; the hall does not look large and gloomy this morning. There are three doors, one in front and one on each side. I choose that



on the left. I find myself in a long dark passage, with gratings on one side.

"How horribly damp and cold this house is!" I draw back out of the close atmosphere into the hall again. Outside with the Comte was sunshine and joyous freedom; inside, the house seems a dungeon.

"Oh!" I cry out, "if the weather could always be warm, and we could live the whole day in the sunshine, how bright life would be."

Just then Rosalie comes out of the door I opened.

"Tiens, tiens, tiens, we could not tell what had become of mademoiselle, and here is Monsieur l'Abbé, who breakfasts alone; does not Mademoiselle wish to breakfast?"

"Yes, but I do not know my way."

Rosalie only shrugs her shoulders. She is detestable, she seems always resolved to put me in the wrong. She throws open the door in front; this also leads into a passage, but a wide airy one; she opens some



double doors at the end, and here is the salle. A grand room as to size, it runs across the back of the house, and has windows down to the ground, screened with muslin curtains; there is a huge fireplace at each end, and scarcely any furniture except a very long table and plain wooden chairs. Only a small part of the long narrow table is covered by a cloth; there is no tea or coffee, only wine in two quaint flagons, and some glasses with twisted stems and spiral curving bells; there are two dishes on the table, besides fruit and cheese. It seems to me more like luncheon than breakfast.

The Abbé rises from the table as I come in.

"Ah! good morning, my dear young lady, I hope you have slept well. I am glad you are come at last; these sand-eels are spoiling, and I do not think you have sand-eels in Australia." He lifts the cover of a dish near him, and I see something very like fried worms lying in a heap.

"I am sorry to be so late, Monsieur, but I have been in the garden, and it is so lovely—and I have been in the boat with Monsieur de Vaucresson." I speak quickly, I want to tell the Abbé myself all I have done, but I cannot help blushing.

But the Abbé is carving a vol-au-vent, he is not looking at me—his eyebrows rise a little, I think.

"I honour your industry and courage," he says simply; "I am sure my pupil has had pleasure in showing you the beauties of Château Fontaine. I wish I could have been with you."

What a dear old man he is! I was sure he would not think I was wrong to amuse myself this beautiful morning. Why should Captain Brand be angry because I have a little pleasure?"

I eat my breakfast and chat with the Abbé; he has been a great traveller, and his remarks about England and English people amuse me extremely. He says he

admires English scenery, he thinks it is like Normandy.

"But you are on your way to one of the loveliest English counties, Mademoiselle."

I look up in surprise. I am on the point of saying I prefer to remain at Château Fontaine, when in comes Captain Brand. He takes no notice of the Abbé; he seats himself in silence, and looks very glum and disagreeable. Oh! how I do hate solemn-faced men, they are just like old book covers, so dull and heavy; I understand now he has seen the Abbé before this morning.

Ah! it is Captain Brand who is the dungeon, not the house. I felt happy and cheerful alone with the Abbé; now it is all restraint and dulness. But I begin to remember that it cannot last long. Captain Brand is in such a hurry to report his shipwreck that he will be going away in a day perhaps, so I may as well be civil to

him. I like to keep friends with everyone, and he, poor man, cannot help having a dull, gloomy nature.

I rouse up from my thoughts; he is speaking to the Abbé.

"Yes, I fancy by the day after tomorrow Miss Stewart will have recovered from her fatigue." I look at him with wondering eyes, and then at the Abbé.

"I shall write to my sister to-day" the Abbé smiles at me—"and prepare her to receive her charming visitor."

I must speak now at once; I feel sure I have only to say I wish to stay at Château Fontaine, and the Abbé will be too pleased to keep me.

"But, Monsieur, if it is not inconvenient to you, I prefer to stay here till Madame La Peyre comes back." I smile purposely at the Abbé. I have remarked that when I smile I usually get my own way. I wonder why I cannot smile at Captain Brand in the same way; I can't—one

might as well try to light a fire with wet wood.

The Abbé's face puckers up till he looks quite droll, his eyebrows rise in the middle, and his mouth comes down, and then he shakes his head gravely and smiles at Captain Brand. I am not going to look at the Captain, I know what he looks like well enough.

"Have I said anything strange, Monsieur?" I say, for the Abbé's smile disheartens me.

"Mademoiselle is always charming, and all she says is delightful, I regret much to lose her,"—he bows to me as if I were the queen,—"but I think it is better she should at once go to Madame La Peyre."

"Of course there is nothing else to be done." Captain Brand says this in the stiffest, harshest way.

I quiver with anger, but I do not know how to resist; if the Abbé does not ask me to stay, what can I do? and yet how can I leave my friend Eugène so soon



without a struggle? I turn my back on the Captain. The Abbé shall see that I am not under his control.

"Monsieur," I look at him beseechingly,
"I am so tired of travelling, I so hoped
I might stay here."

The Abbé shrugs his shoulders very slightly, but he keeps on smiling; it appears to me that all French people shrug their shoulders when they do not like to answer, or when they want to say disagreeable things.

"I regret your departure very much. It would be delightful if you could remain," he says, "but, my dear young lady, I should not dare, in my sister's absence, to undertake so precious a charge, and I do not know how long she may be kept in England; I hope Madame Dayrell's illness may soon yield to nursing, and then we shall see you all back here again."

I can hardly speak, tears come into my eyes, but I will not let Captain Brand see

them, and I am sure he is looking at me. It is strange how strong a dislike I feel for him this morning.

"Shall you be here when we come back?" I say to the Abbé.

"That is uncertain, but still it is possible. I hope so. If you will not eat any more breakfast, Mademoiselle, I will take you to a pleasanter room."

I am just going to say I should like the garden better, and then remember my letter to my father; yes, I will write that letter at once. I will tell papa all I feel about Captain Brand, and then I am sure papa will send for me home.

"Thank you," I say to the Abbé, and then I follow upstairs. It is some comfort that Captain Brand has the sense to stay behind, and that he sees I do not want him; I shall have far too much of his society on our journey to Devonshire.

The Abbé throws open the door of the room we were in last night, and bows me

in; I feel happier. Eugène must come back here presently, he left all his papers about, and his room leads out of this one.

The Abbé moves gently about; he opens a most quaint, old-fashioned square piano, which I had not before noticed. He produces some dingy-looking books from a recess full of shelves, and then he asks me how I mean to employ my morning.

"I am going to write a letter to my father, Monsieur."

I do not know what caused it, but such a lonely sense of desolation comes to me that I begin to cry.

"My dear child—my poor dear child!"
—the kind old man lays his hand on my head—"What is your grief? Ah! it is sad at your age to be thrown among strangers; but you will be happy with my sister."

I take his hand and kiss it. I fancy this surprises him, for he goes off to the

other end of the room. He comes back in a few minutes with a china inkstand, two old pens, and a writing portfolio; and then he departs, after asking me if I have all I want. Ah! how delightful is a courteous manner!

I fancied it would I sit down to write. be so easy to write this letter to my father, but I cannot manage it at all. I have begun, and then my pen gets thick-or perhaps it may be the ink. I sit turning all my e's into Greek e's, to gain time. have still a trick of doing this when my ideas do not flow readily. How it reminds me of those days! It is very startling to see the words I have written down-"I am married to Captain Brand"; it makes my marriage a fact—and all this time I have considered it only as an idea, which can be set aside. Well, but what makes people man and wife? Going to church and being married. I did not go to churchthis is a comforting thought. I do not



think a marriage in a room, or on board ship, can be as binding as a marriage in church. Ah! but kings and queens have been often married in rooms, I think; I am afraid there is something in the service itself which makes it binding.

I hardly remember the service. I jump up to get a prayer-book, and then remember I am in France. I have a prayer-book with me, but only a little one, without any of those special services in it. I wish there had been no big prayer-book on board the *Adelaide*, and then, perhaps, this miserable marriage would not have happened.

Well, suppose that I am really married—people can get divorced, I know that—but then, I fancy, they must both be consenting parties. I don't believe Captain Brand will ever consent. My best chance against him is to get papa to send for me—even Captain Brand will be afraid of papa; he will be quite cowed when papa

writes and rebukes him for the base advantage he took of my mother's illness. Yes, it is true Captain Brand is kind in some ways, but he was horribly selfish to marry me; it is most unjust and tyrannical that he should dislike to see me happy with other people. I remark that, each time I have tried to shake off my great sorrow, and to seem bright and gay, he has frowned and has been cross. I never shall be happy with him, and I never mean to try to be. I would not live with him if there were no one else in the world.

It just comes back to the same thing—whether my marriage be a fact or an idea—I do not care. Nothing shall ever make me look on Captain Brand as my husband. I will not quarrel with him, because I believe he can be very severe—a tyrant—if he chooses; but I am determined not to have any more private talks and explanations with him. I will be always cold and civil; if I keep to this, he will soon dis-

like me. It is troublesome to have to do it; it makes me feel unnatural—for I do not think coldness is easy to keep up. But for the marriage I could not keep it up; but when I think of that, it is less difficult. If I cannot make Captain Brand dislike me, I must escape from him in the best way I can before the end of the two years.

I have laid down my pen during these reflections, and I really must write this letter. I write a few more words, and then I leave off again to read what I have written. I have told papa all the story exactly as it happened, and I feel stricken dumb—hushed out of all my expressions of dislike. What agony it will cost papa to read the news I have told him about my darling mother! And oh, what a trifling, heartless girl I have been, to be able to think of myself so much, to care even whether I am amused or dull, or happy or unhappy, so soon after losing her! And yet I know that I have never yet realised

my grief; that, when at last I find myself in a quiet home again, it will all come to me more really than it can come while I am so tossed about among strangers. Poor dear papa! how terrible it is for him, and for Jane and Anna; they have to begin all this sorrow. I have thought often of their grief before now, but it seems so much more real written down. I sit crying quietly, and it does me good.

At last I have finished my letter, and I read it once again. I have not made my dislike to Captain Brand strong enough—but it is very difficult. I must tell the truth—I must tell how much she liked and trusted him; and, somehow, I cannot write the hard words I want to write when I think over all she said of Captain Brand.

The door opens. I start up; but it is only the Abbé.

"Ne vous dérangez pas."

He holds up his hand, and passes on towards Eugène's study. I lean back in my chair, but I cannot hear voices. Suddenly I hear the key turn in the lock, but the Abbé does not re-appear.

I sit waiting and waiting. I scribble over the blotting-paper till it is spoiled. I wonder what the Abbé went in for.

I have folded my letter and sealed it; I want something to do; there is so little to look at in this great bare room. I never care much for reading, and I am sure that the pianoforte is out of tune. I look at the books with which the Abbé has provided me—Shakespeare, so yellow inside that it is almost illegible; Rasselas and the Vicar of Wakefield. These two last have gilt edges, and I abhor gilt edges; they should only go with dull books, or silly ones.

I jump up. I have not looked out of these windows yet; they face the terrace, and—why, how did he get out?—there is the Abbé going down the green slope with Captain Brand. He cannot have gone

down by the turning staircase, that would have taken him to the back of the house; besides, I saw the Comte lock the door at the bottom and put the key in his pocket. I am tired of sitting here alone; as Eugène is not engaged with the Abbé, he surely might come to me. If I go out in the park I may miss Eugène—and I want to tell him about this dreadful journey. is so nice to feel that he is my friend—he is sure to take my part; he would not think me wrong, as Captain Brand does. I believe that man would like to lecture me all day long; he loves to find fault. I wish I had dared to open the study door; but I am a great coward sometimes.

I smile at my next idea, but I act upon it. I may as well try whether the quaint-looking old piano is in tune or not. The only in-door pursuit I really like is singing; I could sing all day, for the actual love I have for it. I don't know many songs;

but I love one which my mother never liked to hear me sing; she used to say that it suited my voice, but it did not suit my character. It is a kind of a wail all through, with "sad and weary, lone and dreary," coming at the end of each verse. I feel it so much to-day; I am so "lone and dreary," now she has gone from me, that, as I end the song, I burst into sobs and tears.

"Ah! what a dismal, wretched life mine will be to live alone for ever so long!—for it is being quite alone not to be with a person one loves."

Some one has come into the room, but he has not come from the study. I dry my eyes quickly, and I keep my head turned away. It is Eugène, and he comes up to me. I feel sure it is he, but I do not turn round.

"Mademoiselle must not sing such sad songs; her song should be like the lark's, full of joy and upspringing brightness." I forget my red eyes; I turn round pouting.

"I thought you were my friend—and a friend is always sympathetic; and you come and talk to me of brightness, when you might have guessed I had a reason for being dull."

He looks penitent in an instant—I nearly laugh out from contradiction.

"Forgive me, I see that you are really in sorrow, my friend"—his voice is so kind and tender that I am a little comforted. "Won't you tell me about it, Gertrude?"

He drags one of the heavy chairs close to where I sit, and rests his elbow on the piano. This is delightful. I am quite happy in remembering that those two interfering men are safe at the bottom of the hill.

"Have you not heard, then?" I look at him, and I suppose all my misery shows in my eyes—for he speaks sadly again.

"No, I have heard nothing. I felt unwilling to follow your guardian this morning when I saw him near the river; he is, I think, a rude person, and when I came in from riding, both he and the Abbé were absent,"

I feel chilled; Eugène has been enjoying himself while I have been so miserable.

"Then you do not know I am to go away at once. It is true,—I am to take another long journey to find Madame La Peyre?"

He starts up and looks very angry.

"No, it is impossible; I have not heard this; you shall not go. I ask you, Gertrude, how can this Captain take you against your will?"

He looks at me so keenly, with such glowing eyes, that my eyes droop.

"It is not so much that I am taken away as that your Abbé does not ask me to remain."

He looks delighted.

"Oh, if that is all, it can be arranged; be happy, my friend; the Abbé refuses me nothing." I shake my head.

"Ah, but he will refuse you this, and this"—I feel compelled to give some reason for Captain Brand's interference—"this person with whom I travel received a charge from my mother to place me with Madame La Peyre himself, so he feels anxious to see me with her. There is no help, I must go."

I look up again—his eyes are full of reproach.

"And I see it well, you do not care to stay! It is true—this which I hear of you English, you are all cold alike, cold as ice. Only just now you promised to be my friend, and to stay here with me, that we might amuse one another, and you are now resigned to leave me; you are cold as an icicle."

He turns away and walks up and down the room. He looks angry and dignified, but very handsome. I am so unhappy to have displeased him.

I sit still, feeling as if my heart were growing big enough to choke me. Why

do I care so much to leave him? What is this influence he has over me? I do not know. I only feel that if he turns against me my heart must burst, it aches so sorely. He strides up and down with long steps—I believe I am afraid of him. But I cannot bear this silence. I cannot sit here and let Eugène be miserable, thinking I am selfish, and that I do not care to please him, when I do care so much!

"Monsieur de Vaucresson"—I say it very timidly, and he stops in his walk.

"Eh bien, Mademoiselle—what is it?"

"It is you who are cold and unjust,"—hot tears start out and blind me,—"can you not see that I am unhappy, and, instead of being sorry for me, you only scold and frighten me."

And then I hide my face, and my heartache breaks forth in convulsive sobs.

He comes close to me directly. "My dear little one, my sweet friend, do not—it is cruel—it pains me," he whispers; and then



he takes my hands from my face and holds them fast, but I draw them away "Come into the study," he says, "we shall be better there."

He goes to open the door—it is locked. He turns round and looks at me.

This is extraordinary. I did not even know there was a key."

The Abbé went in there a little while ago,"—and then I stop and redden with anger; I begin to see that the Abbé has locked the door to separate me from his pupil.

Eugène comes back to me, but the charm is broken—I draw myself away when he comes close again.

I am tired of being in the house. "Let us go into the garden, you know I have still to see the other side of the river."

"As you please," and he looks vexed.

I follow him slowly down the great staircase. I like him very much, and yet I have grown shy again, and I wish he had not snatched my hands in that vehement way. I am not actually angry with him, but still I am troubled, I do not feel the same happy freedom I felt in the morning,—and I begin to wonder how I am to prevent him from doing it again.

I suppose in France friends are more affectionate than we English are, and yet how can I tell? I never had a boy friend before, and girl friends—I have seen them very affectionate—still it made me so uncomfortable.

When we are outside the garden door we see Captain Brand and the Abbé coming along the terrace. Eugène mutters a strange sounding word, and then, instead of going down the steps, he comes back and stands beside me in the door-way.

I look down into the faces now at the foot of the steps. I see the stern set expression in Captain Brand's eyes, and I harden myself yet more against him. Oh! it is too

cruel, in the midst of all my sorrow and loneliness, just when a little gleam of brightness has visited me, that he should grudge it me. The Abbé's face is twitching and puckering in the most singular fashion.

Eugène gives them no time to speak.—
"Monsieur l'Abbé, it is not true, is it,
that you have consented to allow this young
lady to depart from Château Fontaine even
before she has reposed herself; you could
not be so inhospitable?"

A deep red flush comes on Captain Brand's face. I feel frightened, so I look away from him, and hold myself as erect as I can. The Abbé smiles, and fondles his smooth chin with one hand.

"I have no choice, my son; Mademoiselle is not confided to me, but to Madame, my sister, and I may not interfere with her claims."

He shrugs his shoulders and raises his other hand—to show that the subject is



dismissed; but Eugène runs down on to the terrace, passes his arm through the Abbé's, and drags him along under the trees.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ABBÉ ON GUARD.

O I was left alone with Captain Brand. I did not run away this time. I resolved to let him say what he chose. But he only came quietly up the steps.

"This is a quaint old place, is it not?" He spoke quite calmly. "I am sorry to hurry you away, but I have no alternative. I think you will be happy here when you come back, if you like Madame La Peyre."

"I am sure to like her. Now, if you please, I want to know how I am to send my letter to my father?"

"You will have to wait till we reach Havre again, or even Southampton; these cross-country foreign posts are neither safe nor expeditious;" and then he stood aside for me to pass into the house.

"No, thank you, I shall stay here a little; I have been in-doors all the morning since breakfast."

He had the sense to go in and leave me alone; but, even if he had stayed, I should have sent him to fetch something for me, and then I should have given him the slip. Still I was softened; it was honest of him to be so careful about my letter, and as he is fond of lecturing, he might have said something disagreeable to me about this morning, for he must have seen me get out of the boat.

Here I blushed at the remembrance, and ran down the steps. Rosalie came out of the door as I left it; she had my hat in her hand.

She came panting down the steps afterme. "Monsieur le Capitaine has sent me to bring the hat of Mademoiselle. Ma foi! I have not till now seen a young lady who

will run about in full air with a bare head; it is enough for a sunstroke; and then it spoils the skin."

I took the hat from Rosalie very haughtily. Captain Brand is absurd; he seems to think I am quite a child.

"I am just as well without a hat; after a sea voyage, Rosalie, there is not any complexion left to spoil, and I like to be left alone."

"Hein!" Rosalie put her head on one side, and looked at me as if I were a new species of female. "When Mam'selle gets to England, she will find a change; my mother Angélique knows well how to bring up the young ladies—ma foi, Mam'selle will see for herself how different it will be."

"What can your mother have to do with me? Do you know, Rosalie, that Madame La Peyre would not be pleased at the free way in which you are talking to me?"

Rosalie nodded and nodded till her earrings danced in the sunshine, and her



freckled face looked uglier than ever.

"Mademoiselle is wise, no doubt, but she does not know everything." She looked spiteful, I thought. "My mother Angélique is the *femme-de-chambre* of Madame La Peyre; as well could this hand do without its fellow "—she clapped one of

her brown palms into the other—"as our mistress without my mother. Mam'selle will find also that Madame, our mistress, is just and good; she will not believe evil of those who have served her and hers for generations, at the word of a stranger and a heretic."

Rosalie crossed herself and turned up her eyes, till I only saw the yellow whites of them. Already I had taken a strange dislike to this woman, now I felt inclined to smile; her rudeness was explained. She hated me because I was a heretic.

"But, Rosalie, how unjust you are! How can I help being what you call a heretic? We do not choose our religion when we are born."

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She put one hand over her light freckled brows, and peered at me from underneath it suspiciously, with a slow, questioning look.

"Aha! we shall see. Mam'selle may be a heretic from ignorance now, but when she returns to Château Fontaine she will have seen la mère Angélique; and la mère will teach her better. A heretic who does not go to mass, even on Sunday—ah, mon Dieu! Mam'selle knows, does she not, that if she is an obstinate heretic she is damned, body and soul, and must burn in everlasting torment."

She smiled while she said these horrible words—I could not bear it. I ran past her through the trees till I reached the river, and then crept along beside it till I came to the place where I had landed in the morning.

I looked round, but there was nothing living in sight; a plank was laid across the narrow stream, and I crossed and found an upward path that soon brought me round opposite the Château to the grassed terraces and old statues I had seen from the other side. But the grass was ragged and overgrown—in some places worn away, and in places supplied by moss of a close, slimy growth, or by huge bare patches of white rock—the statues were green and broken with age and neglect; there were fountains, but they were dry and choked, and the spaces where flowers should have been were overrun with coarse-leaved weeds.

It was all better at a distance. I went on till the trees grew thicker and came near to the river. This was the wood I had seen from the other side.

It was very pleasant here. I did not know how fierce the sun's heat had been till I reached the cool green shadow. I leaned against one of the tall, slender trees—a bright-eyed squirrel darted across from a bough above my head, looked down saucily

at me for a minute, and then dropped an empty nut-shell at my feet.

"Dear little fellow—he is free—he has no one to control him and watch him all day."

I wish Rosalie had not said that about her mother. I was beginning to look forward with pleasure to seeing Madame La Peyre, and staying with her in Devonshire; butif I am to be preached at all day, and told I am a heretic by this mère Angélique, she will not be much improvement on Captain Brand; however, I shall get rid of him—that is a decided comfort.

I walked on to the wooden bridge, and re-crossed the little river. I longed to get into the boat, I saw it had been brought back again—but I had no skill in rowing, and I was afraid. Then I tried to find my way up through the hanging wood to the little garden behind the Château, with the clipped yew-hedge, but I tried in vain. The nut-wood was full of paths all



exactly alike. I took first one, and then another, but always came back to the same point. I was so tired at last that I went back to the bridge and sat down on it.

A long time must have been spent in this ramble, for when I reached the bridge again the sun was actually out of sight; but then I was of course at the bottom of the valley he had to cross every day, and there were high trees on each bank.

Looking towards the turn of the river, I saw some one moving there. It might be Eugène. I was not tired now. I felt in a glow of happiness as I hurried along through the birch-wood. A little gate led out of this on to the ruined terraces. I passed my squirrel just before I reached it. "Ah! my friend, I don't envy you now—I am as happy as you are."

I opened the gate, and I saw that it was not Eugène, it was the Abbé, coming down from the last terrace. He smiled. "Ah! my dear young lady, I have been seeking you this long time—you must be so dull wandering about by yourself. My pupil has gone out riding."

Always riding, I thought, and for a minute I am sure I looked vexed.

The Abbé looked keenly at me—but I was on my guard. I felt affronted with this sly old man about the locked door, and I was determined not to trust him more than he trusted me. I was quite disappointed with him. I had thought him so gentle and easy to manage.

"I am the more grieved to have lost so much of your society, as we are to have so little of it, less even than we expected."

I felt my eyes and cheeks flame with eagerness. What have these two meddling men been plotting? They are resolved to keep Eugène and me apart—they shall not. I will talk to him again before I leave Château Fontaine.

"I don't understand," I said to the Abbé.

He looked at me before he answered.

"For one thing I am glad"—he spoke as soothingly as if I were a fractious child of six—" for you will be a day sooner with my sister—you are to leave us early tomorrow, Mademoiselle."

"To-morrow! I cannot—I will not!" I spoke impetuously, and the Abbé looked surprised—pained, I fancied; "I am much too tired to travel again so soon; Captain Brand is so rough and strong that he cannot of course judge of my fatigue."

The Abbé raised his brows, but he looked more sweetly courteous than ever.

"I am grieved to hear that Mademoiselle is so fatigued. I had no idea of it—on the contrary, I thought Mademoiselle had been roaming about of her own free will ever since I last saw her. The sun has no doubt tired her."

I looked sharply at him—but there was not a trace of sarcasm in his smile.

The old sly boots! "It is quite different,

Monsieur, to saunter about this charming place to please oneself, and to take a long journey to please another person."

"But do you not know, Mademoiselle, why the Capitaine Brand is so anxious to proceed to England?"

The Abbé looked at me with a wondering inquiry in his eye.

I did not answer. I could not say, "He wants to take me away from Eugène"; though I knew well enough that was his reason. The Abbé was obliged to go on:

"When a vessel is lost, it is necessary that the Capitaine should report its loss personally with as little delay as possible. Monsieur Brand already has come out of his way to bring you here, but he thought to find my sister, and to have gone back at once to Hâvre. I believe he is quite right, Mademoiselle, to depart to-morrow, otherwise he may get into trouble, and I am sure you are too generous to wish him to incur rebuke unnecessarily."

I felt the truth of this, but I felt impatient, too, with the Abbé and his formal discourse. I longed to run away from him, and I walked on rapidly. I might as well have tried to escape from my own shadow; he suited his pace to mine. If I stopped, he at once found something to admire or inspect, and finally—before I had decided on any plan of freeing myself from him—he had led me without any seeming compulsion back to the house, and stood aside to let me pass up the terrace steps."

"As you, Mademoiselle, are so tired, you must want rest."

He spoke so sweetly that, even while I chafed against it, I was obliged to find his companionship pleasant. He stopped when we came to the first turn in the gallery.

"I have a more comfortable resting-place here than you will find in the salon—if you will honour me with a visit."

He opened a door and led the way into

the cosiest little room I ever saw—it was square, with one deeply recessed window in it, heavy dark curtains were drawn nearly across this, so that there was not much light except from some smouldering logs in the tiled fire-place, but the Abbé lit the wax candles in two silver sconces on each side of it, and the room looked bright and cheerful as well as cosy. I saw that there was a rich Persian carpet, and that the chairs and sofas were covered with faded Eastern-looking stuffs.

"Will you sit down here, Mademoiselle?"
It looked only an ordinary easy-chair,
but as I seated myself the back yielded,
and I found myself almost lying full-length
on a comfortable sofa.

"Now, my dear child"—he spoke quite genially, not in the studied courteous way that I had fancied natural to him—"rest, or go to sleep, just as you please; I have to write, and shall not disturb you."

"Thank you, I will rest here a little, it

is very pleasant, and then I will go to my room."

I lay still, watching the sparks fly up like silent messengers—watching the Abbé settle to his carved writing-desk in one corner; then my eyes strayed round, and I saw a recess with a curtain half drawn across it—here fixed against the wall was a beautiful silver crucifix—and I caught a vision of a prayer-desk and an image of the Madonna—also I thought I saw one of the leaves of a tryptich. I began to think I should like to explore that nook.

What a dear comfortable little room, and I can make out in the uncertain light that there are pictures on the walls and statuettes on the mantelshelf, and rows of quaint shelves with books, and here and there rosaries hanging on the wall. Yes, I will lie here a little longer, and then—

"Mademoiselle! Mam'selle Stewa---!"

Is it the Abbé shrieking at me? My

arm is shaken violently. I open my eyes



and start up to find Rosalie's yellow eyebrows close to my face.

"What is it? Why, I have only just lain down here; what has happened?"

"Mam'selle"—Rosalie shakes me again
—what a spiteful creature she is, she must
see I am awake,—"the dinner is served,
they are placing themselves at table—is
Mam'selle going to make Monsieur l'Abbé
wait for her at dinner as well as at breakfast?"

I feel provoked.

"If they have gone in to dinner they are not waiting for me; you can say I am coming."

And then without looking at her, I run upstairs to my room. My flushed face and half-closed eyes show me that I have been sound asleep.

"Well, it shows how tired I am still; they may wait or begin as they please, I am not going down till I have set my hair straight."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN BRAND'S RESOLUTION.

Abbé, and then I saw Eugène ever so far off on the other side of the table, with Captain Brand facing him. Something in all this vexes me. It seems planned to keep us apart. We do not wish to be deceitful, and yet, if we are to speak to one another, we must do it by stealth; these two men are making us deceitful, without any fault of ours.

The dinner is long and dull. I make no effort to speak, I observe that Eugène scarcely looks towards me. The Abbé is more charming than ever, so I rouse myself, and answer him at last.

"I am so pleased that you like my hermitage, Mademoiselle," he says; "you can, if you please, occupy it in my absence when you return to Château Fontaine. It is a capital nook to study in, and also, it seems, it is good for sleep," he adds, with a sly smile.

I feel ashamed.

"But shall you not be here, Monsieur, when Madame La Peyre returns?"

"That is like all the rest of life, my charming young friend—quite undecided."

"I don't agree with you about life"—I feel cross as I say this; "I think, if one has a firm will and perseverance, one can determine one's own life, and make circumstances yield."

The Abbé's eyebrows go up, and the corners of his mouth droop, with the peculiar look I before noticed. I study his face very much, because instinct tells me that he does not show himself to outsiders that which he really is. At the same time,

I am conscious that Capt. Brand is studying my face just as keenly as I study the Abbé's.

"That is a remarkable opinion for a woman, and especially for a young lady. Depend on it, my dear child, we are all safer and happier on the road chosen for us by others than on the new paths we may choose for ourselves."

There is a touch of earnestness—of entreaty even—in the Abbé's voice that startles me. A suspicion comes like lightning; I look quickly at Captain Brand, and I see him glance at the Abbé.

I understand everything now—the locking of the study door, and the way in which the Abbé has monopolised me for the afternoon. Captain Brand has told him the story of the marriage.

I do not think I ever was so angry. Till now I looked upon it as a dead secret, known only to three persons, and it had never occurred to me that Captain Brand would tell anyone of his own base conduct.

I get up, and I say stiffly, "I have a headache, Monsieur, and I will go upstairs."

"We will all go." The Abbé rises so nimbly that I have not a chance of escape. "Mademoiselle is suffering from being out in the sunshine; she shall have some coffee, which will cure her headache, and then perhaps she will have the goodness to sing me a song."

We were near the door as he spoke. I saw Captain Brand's face beam with sudden pleasure; but I cared too little to find out the cause of his changed expression.

Upstairs the room felt cold, and I grew calmer. As soon as we had had coffee, the Abbé asked his pupil to open the piano. Eugène opened it, and then he stood looking at an old engraving which hung near. It seemed as if he were waiting for me. Captain Brand had just asked the Abbé a question about our journey, so I felt free from his watchfulness. I got up quickly and went to the piano, but Eugène moved

away as soon as I reached it. Then I saw why he had stood so still—a little threecornered note lay on the keyboard.

How easily slyness comes! I had always detested concealment or secrets, and yet almost without thought I took the note up as quickly as if I were a practised deceiver, and leant over the piano while I slipped it into the pocket of my dress.

I was taken by surprise, and at the moment could not think what else to do, but I was upset and excited, and my voice fluttered as I began to sing, and Eugène came up to the piano again. At first this made me more timid, but the song was an Adieu, and by the time I reached the end my eyes had grown misty and my voice choked. I gave a timid glance up at Eugène, but I could not understand his face, and yet I had heard a sigh while I sang.

Then I felt that some one was going away from the back of my chair. I turned

slightly round, and saw Captain Brand move into the darkest corner of the room.

"Thank you a hundred times, Mademoiselle, you have given me real pleasure." The Abbé said this in his most winning manner.

I thought Captain Brand might have said something. Why did he come to listen and then go away without a word? If he only kept behind me to watch Eugène, he would have stayed, because Eugène was still beside me. What did he mean?

But I only thought this for an instant, and then I forgot everything but the note in my pocket. I was longing to read it. The Abbè asked for another song, and I sang a little lively Spanish air. I had picked it up from listening to a sailor on board the Adelaide. Eugène said "Brava!" the Abbé was delighted; Captain Brand said "Thank you," but he did not stand behind me listening this time.

The evening dragged wearily, and my impatience grew unbearable. The Abbé took me round the room and showed me the quaint treasures collected by Monsieur La Peyre and his predecessors. I did not care much to look at them, and I suppose the Abbé found out my indifference. I could only think of my note, and wonder what was in it.

"You are tired," he said at last, "and you have a long journey before you. I think, Mademoiselle, you will be glad to say good night."

I said "good night" to Captain Brand, and I was just going to hold my hand out to Eugène, but he made me a low formal bow. I knew that Captain Brand was looking at us, and I felt guilty; but why should Eugène hide his friendship? I had no wish to hide mine.

The Abbé had reached the door and was holding it open. I think he gave me

his blessing as he handed me into the charge of Rosalie.

"Ah! without doubt Mam'selle is ready for bed;" there was a hard, satirical ring in the voice of this clumsy, ugly woman that jarred upon me; "Mam'selle is sleepy, and no wonder—if young ladies will run about all day long in the sunshine like dogs and cats, they cannot expect to keep awake."

I was too tired to argue, or to care for what she said. But why should this woman dislike me so much? I felt almost afraid of her—not of anything she could do to harm me, but of the malicious looks I got from her dull, yellow-fringed eyes.

"Good night," we had reached my bedroom door, and I held out my hand for the lamp she carried.

"Tiens, Mam'selle is in too much haste to-night." She came in and lighted the lamp on my table, and then she dawdled about the room, pretending to arrange the bed and dressing-table, where there was no need of arrangement.

I longed to tell her to go; I gaped ostentatiously, but she took no notice, she behaved just as if she knew I had that note in my pocket, and that I was dying to read it.

She went at last, but put her head into the room a few moments after, to ask at what time I wished to be called, then I heard her heavy footsteps outside for some time as she finally departed. I have no means of fastening the door, and I hesitate to take my note out of my pocket. I scarcely know why I shrink from Rosalie's observation. Why should I hesitate to read the note before her? I care little enough for the opinion of my inferiors—but now I can wait no longer. I take it out and look at it longingly—and still I put off for a minute the dear delight of reading it. At last I untwist it. Such a few words! written in a neat formal hand.

"When you quit your bed-room to-morrow, come straight downstairs, and when you reach the door by which you enter the gallery pass it by, and go on descending the turning staircase till you reach the foot of it—it will be very dark, but the door at the bottom is unfastened; you will find me outside that door. I beseech you to come, I have something special to say to you."

This is all; there is neither beginning nor end. I read it over and over again. I think of it all the time I say my prayers, and I put it under my pillow when I at last get into bed—but I cannot make up my mind what to do.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FAREWELL.

I WOKE early, and jumped out of bed; as I dressed I suddenly remembered that Eugène had not specified any time in his note. Captain Brand had said we were to leave Château Fontaine very early. Unless I do what Eugène asks, I shall very likely not be allowed even to say goodbye to him. There can be no harm in just doing that. I can go down the winding staircase as soon as I am ready; but then Rosalie may come with my coffee, and she will seek for me. I feel that Rosalie means mischief. I do not think one ever takes so strong a dislike for

nothing, and it is not ordinary dislike that I feel towards this woman; it is a shrinking antipathy. I am not ashamed of going to say good-bye to Eugène, but there is no need that Rosalie should know it.

When I am dressed, I open the window and look out; the sun shines brightly, but my window only looks down on a little dingy square court, with buildings on all four sides, and a pump with a greenish stone trough in the centre; but though I can only see a blue sky, so blue that there is nothing suggestive in it, I can hear the birds chirping and twittering to one another in a very pleasant fashion, unlike anything I ever heard on the other side of the The sound leads my thoughts away world. from Eugène, and a longing comes to me for something which I have never known -a home, such a home as I have dreamed of, full of sunshine, and mirth, and love, without the petty formalities which in our house made us a collection of persons like

the books on the library-shelves—separately closed, with no power of getting together.

My father I saw every morning at our breakfast. It was a silent meal; he read his letters, and I scarcely said a word to him. I spent all my evenings in the school-room. I had never really seen much of my mother till we came on board the Adelaide. She always breakfasted in her own room, and I believe her day was given up to my two sisters and to the duties of society. She came into the school-room every morning and kissed me, and I lunched with her. My governess was so anxious for my progress that she never allowed talk on any subject but education; besides, she was always reading to herself.

The birds seem to have happy homes in their nests. But the birds leave their nests as soon as they are full grown, so the time is past for the home life I have been longing for, and then I remember that every bird makes itself a nest of its own.

Ah! but it is quite different, and it only shows that one cannot make comparisons between animal and human life. Every bird mates, and I suppose quite half the men and women never marry, and unless one has a home like a nest, I would rather not marry.

At last I hear Rosalie coming, and for once I am glad to see her; marriage, and all thoughts belonging to it, make me feel weary of life. I should like a home with plenty of friends in it, but no husband or marriage for me. I am much too young.

"Tiens, Mam'selle,"—Rosalie sets the tray on the table and pulls off the tucked-up ends of the cloth with triumph—"but see how good is Monsieur l'Abbé, here is a wing of chicken and some eggs, and a brioche and coffee and some apricots, because Mam'selle makes her journey at the hour when reasonable folks take their breakfast."

"Yes, he is very good; you can thank



Monsieur l'Abbé for me; it is possible I shall not see him before I go."

"Yes, it is possible; it is now seven, and the cart is to come at eight for the luggage of Mam'selle."

She stands by me waiting to see me begin, so I eat as fast as I can, in the hope she will go. But she lingers so long that I lose patience, and begin to eat slowly.

"You need not stay, Rosalie," I say; "you must have plenty to do, and I shall eat much better if I am left alone."

Rosalie looks at me with her sly eyes, and then she laughs and goes away. I am half glad to leave Château Fontaine, because of that woman; she is something between an idiot and a witch; a sort of yellow-haired female Caliban. I believe she is much younger than I fancied her. But I must hurry now. I pack all my things, and then I put on my hat, and open the door very quietly.

In a moment or two I am safely past the

door leading on to the gallery, and then I go on down the corkscrew stairs. My heart beats violently as I go down, down, down. Eugène may well call it dark; it feels like a well or a dungeon, and seems full of cobwebs, which come filming into my eyes and mouth, and turn me sick with horror. how I abhor darkness, it is so like falsehood and deceit. This thought makes me stand still so suddenly that I cling to the rope, and quite forget how dirty it looked up above in the light. Deceit! What am I doing this morning? Why did I go by Captain Brand's door so quietly, if I am not deceitful? But no, nonsense, it is all his fault; he has put me into a false position, and he is answerable for all that happens. I must go on now; Eugène is my friend, and he is waiting. I hurry on; and come to the end of the staircase with a suddenness that nearly upsets me. I grope for the fastening of the door, and I feel the latch move under my fingers. Eugène is



pushing it open from the other side.

I just see that he looks more handsome than ever in the bright sunshine; and then his eyes sparkle so at sight of me that I feel all at once ashamed and shy. If the door had not closed again behind me, I believe I should have run away.

"Dear Gertrude, this is very kind;" he holds my hand tightly in his, and draws me away from the door. I cannot remember now what the place was like that we stood in; I only know that it was not the pig and chicken yard of yesterday. All I see is Eugène, and behind him is thick shrubbery, and a great plot of yellow marigolds grows at our feet.

"Then you know I am going this morning." I look up at Eugène; his face is so full of love for me that tears come up into my eyes; and then, I do not know how, but both my hands are in Eugène's, and he is calling me his "bien-aimée."

"But I shall never see you again."-My

lips quiver so that I stop; I shall sob ouright if I try to speak.

"Never see me? Gertrude, is it possible that you do not understand my love? You are my idol; I adore you; I worship you I must, I will see you again." He kisses no hands and I try to pull them away, but he quiet in an instant. "Do not be alarme my well-beloved, it is all new to you; and if had not been for this cruel parting, I wou have been more discreet, more patient; be how can I let you depart, my angwithout telling you my love—without as ing for yours in return; you do love me, you not?"

"I—I—you are my friend." I a getting so red that my eyes feel the gloon my cheeks. "Yes, I will always be yo friend." I get this out bravely, and loup once more at Eugène.

He bends down and whispers, "You w be my friend now, but some day you w be my dearest friend;" and then his ar comes round me, and he draws my face to his shoulder. For the moment I am glad to hide it. But I release myself quickly.

- "Oh!" I whisper, "let me be always your friend."
- "Say that you love me, and you shall be what you please." His lips are so close that the words are breathed into me rather than spoken.
- "You will write to me, my beautiful Gertrude?"
- "How can I write? Oh, no," I whisper, "I must not write."
- "Listen, Gertrude. I will write first. I have heard of this English village where Madame La Peyre lives. The Abbé has seen it, and he has described it to me. There is a post-office, and you will inquire there yourself for letters, and in every letter I will tell you where to write to me."

I look up, I am frightened, and yet I am full of admiration; he seems such a strong power for my lonely helplessness. I can hardly believe I have such a friend.

"But you will forget me after a little,"

I say timidly; for indeed, when I look up and see him so bright, so beautiful and noble, a painful sense of unworthiness comes to me; I feel quite another girl from the Gertrude who thinks herself too good for Captain Brand.

"Do you think I can forget you, my beloved? that can never be. He puts his arm round me, and I raise my head in remonstrance; and somehow Eugène kisses my lips. I free myself at once; I am angry, but I tremble from head to foot.

"Oh! Eugène, how can you be so wrong? You must not, indeed you must not; friends can be quite as dear without that."

He takes my hand so very gently and tenderly

"My dear little one, it is nothing; when dear friends part, they must be allowed to say a tender farewell. You are not afraid I shall forget you now. That is my pledge; we belong to each other; you believe me, my sweet friend." His words send a shudder through me. I do not look on Captain Brand as my husband, but I have sense enough to know that for the present there is a bar between me and Eugène. I will tell him everything at once, and he shall decide.

My hand has stayed in his passively, but now I hold it tightly, and I look up in his face for the help I need in my confession. Ah! I need never doubt his love; his eyes are telling me that, telling it with such a glow of confident happiness that my doubts are quite melted by the warmth that seems to fill my veins; doubt is so chill of itself, it cannot linger now.

"Eugène, I do believe you." He takes both my hands in his again, and looks at me so intently that I cannot keep my eyes on his; "but I want to tell you something."

He starts. "Not now, my well-beloved—another time." He takes one hand away, but holds both mine with the other, and I feel that he is turning to look behind him.

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A gate opens and swings to (even now, if I hear the sharp slam of a gate, my heart turns sick at the sound); then heavy, powerful steps—how well I know them—come close to where we are standing. Eugène lets go my hand. I try to be myself again, and look boldly up at Captain Brand, and claim my right to this leave-taking with Eugène. I am not a slave. I wonder why Eugène looks so disappointed. He stands quite silent.

"Miss Stewart, I have been looking for you," Captain Brand's voice sounds so very hard and severe, and he is strangely pale; "we are to start almost directly. Will you come and see about your luggage with me?"

My spirit forces itself through my confusion.

"I have no luggage, only the bag I brought from Hâvre—that is quite ready in my room."

I draw a little nearer to Eugène. I feel that this is perhaps our last moment to-

gether. I will not be carried off from him without saying, "Good-bye."

Captain Brand is surely bewitched. I had counted on making him angry, and then I knew I could manage him, but his voice is just as hard and measured when he speaks again:

"Very well; then we will go together to make our adieux to the Abbé, and thank him for his kind hospitality." I turn to Eugène, and I feel a warning pressure in his hand, but I am resolved that Captain Brand shall not see me say "good-bye," so I turn my back upon him.

"Come along," he says very roughly. "Come along to the Abbé."

He is angry now, but I do not care. We have said good-bye, and I am following the man whom I hate more than ever along a rough path, through gates I do not know, till we emerge beside the terrace before the house.

How dreadful it is to say "good-bye," and

to feel some one stands by who has no sympathy with either one's love or one's sorrow. "Good-bye"—it is so quickly said, but till it is said the meaning does not touch one's heart. It feels to me like a dream that I am parted from Eugène. I have not said one of the words I had planned to say. I wanted to ask so many questions, to tell him he is the first friend I had ever had—the only one I mean to trust in. I am wrenched away, with all these new springing feelings created for no purpose, for they cannot be shared with I long to get relief in a burst of tears, but my heart is hard and heavy; there is a dull weight on everything, which checks the keen sorrow that pierces me. A cry goes up from me as the weight grows heavier.

"I cannot bear it—I cannot! What have I done to have all this grief laid on me, and such a hopeless load beyond; for I feel so subjected by the strong will which is,

as it were, leading me away a captive, that, in this despair I am hopeless of freedom."....

The charrette, a very rude chaise-cart, is below the terrace steps. My walnut-faced friend, the concierge, stands at the horses' heads smiling, as if departure were a festival.

The Abbé comes out of the house as we draw near; he must have been watching for us, but I scarcely notice him; beyond him, hiding behind one flap of the double doors, I see the grinning face of Rosalie,—grinning, and yet with such a fixed spite in her eyes that surely some fiend has picked up a satyr's mask, and is watching our departure through its eyeholes.

Ah! it is Rosalie who has done it; she has been the spy on me, and then sent Captain Brand to disturb my parting with Eugène. But I do not feel angry, I seem lost in utter dull stupor.

"We will start as soon as you are ready," Captain Brand says.

I do not answer him. I hurry up-stairs to see that I have not left anything, and I come down again; and now we have shaken hands with the Abbé, and we are on our way to Hâvre.

Yes, I have left Château Fontaine; when shall I see it again?

I leave off here. I think I have left my childish days on the threshold of that door beside the plot of marigolds—till to-day I have lived for myself—now I am only a part of the life of Eugène de Vaucresson.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO LETTERS.

"From Captain Brand to the Abbé de Nivières.

"Southampton, August 20th, 18-.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I intended to write and thank you for all your courtesy and kindness, both to my charge and to myself, during our stay at Château Fontaine. I do this the more speedily, because, after our talk was ended, it struck me that I had forgotten something of which I will now speak.

"When I told you of my marriage with Miss Stewart on board the *Adelaide*, I said that I intended to keep the circumstance a secret from everyone, even, for the present, from your sister, Madame La Peyre; but it occurred to me, as I left you, that it may be as well to make an exception with regard to your pupil.

"He is very young, and Miss Stewart is very beautiful, and he was evidently much taken with her, and a sudden impression of that kind, if dreamed over, as many young fellows are apt to dream, may encourage hopes in him which can only end in disappointment.

"The knowledge that this young lady is no longer free to bestow affection on any man will no doubt remove any undesirable impression, and, should the young people meet again, will place them at once in their proper positions towards each other. I shall therefore be very thankful if you will lose no time in making this communication to your young friend.

"You seemed to think I was wrong in wishing to keep this marriage a secret, and in the hurry of our interview I



did not sufficiently explain my motives. "First and foremost, I promised Mrs. Stewart that for two years to come her daughter should have the full freedom and privileges of a single woman. In England girls are less strictly watched over than they are in France-we trust them more, I I shall arrange with your sister suppose. that Miss Stewart is treated as other English girls are. Mrs. Stewart exacted this promise from me from her own knowledge of her daughter's character; she said if I wanted her to love me I must treat her as if she were still to be won-that any assumption of a right to her affections would entirely alienate them, and my own experience has confirmed this judgment. I agree with you in thinking the marriage a very unfortunate affair; I still think the formal engagement I proposed would have been much better for both of us, but this proposal did not satisfy Mrs. Stewart's scruples, or calm the anxiety which was



plainly helping to destroy her; she repeat that only as my wife could her daughter he any suitable claim to my protection and su port, and I yielded against my own judgme I feel now that I was wrong and selfish yielding. I let my own feelings for M Stewart blind my judgment. I still ho for the best, and I think my plan is mo likely to succeed than that of assuming t authority of a husband to a girl who is many ways still quite a child. We sh see; in the meantime I promise you th should I see real harm likely to arise fro keeping your sister in ignorance, I will t her everything.

"I have the honour to be,
"Dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,
"George Bran

"A letter addressed to me at my la yers', Messrs. W. & P. Noslen, Ess Street, Strand, London, will find me."

" The Abbé de Nivières to Captain Brand.

"Château Fontaine, Seine Inférieure, Normandie, "August 23, 18—.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your amiable letter. I assure you that I experienced much pleasure in receiving two such delightful guests as Miss Stewart and yourself, and I hope that this pleasure may before long be renewed by your return to Château Fontaine.

"If you insist that I should make the communication you speak of to Monsieur de Vaucresson, I will of course do so; but I very much doubt either the prudence or the use of so doing. My notion of a very young man's love is that it is best let alone—that any interference or warning fans a flicker, which might end in smoke, into decided flame. You will say that is only my opinion; well, I will go on.

"Our marriage law is very strict; we do



not receive the idea of divorce as you do in England. With us marriage is a holy sacrament. I am aware that you call it so also in England, but then, how can you admit divorce? So far we have the advantage, but, alas! the results are not always commensurate.

"Whether from the utter want of religion in our colleges and universities, or from the strictness with which young men are excluded from the society of the unmarried of the other sex, there is, I fear, much too great freedom of opinion among our young men as to the amount of intimacy to be allowed between French married ladies and young men who are not their husbands.

"This is a subject which I should not be inclined to discuss with my pupil, and I hope he is at present free from the evil ideas which pervade our society; but still I do not feel sure that the knowledge that your charge is married will shield her as effectually from the love of a young



Frenchman as it would from that of an Englishman.

"You must remember that here, in the opinion of society, the married woman is free to act as she pleases, while the single woman is under constant supervision. I shall therefore await your reply before I speak to my pupil.

"Accept the assurance of my most distinguished consideration.

"Your servant,

"Alphonse de Nivières."

"My caution about Miss Stewart simply implied that, if you treat her as if she were completely free, you can hardly expect from her the docility or the reserve of a married woman; but doubtless you understand your own matters best."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DEVONSHIRE VILLAGE.

BELIEVE in first impressions. Now that I see the words written down, I fancy I have small reason personally for this belief; but the first aspect of Merdon, in all the golden glory of an August afternoon, softened at a glance the dislike I had conceived against it as a place of residence.

I had spoken very little to Captain Brand on our journey. We crossed at night from Hâvre to Southampton, and then travelled on with scarcely any pause all the long tedious way into Devonshire. I believe the country between Exeter and Merdon is very beautiful, but I was too unhappy and too tired to care about it. I

leaned back with closed eyes, neither asleep nor awake. I only thought of Eugène and our hurried parting. The continual talk of two old gentlemen about politics kept me from really sleeping, although I could not get interested in what they said; and when they changed the subject, and I hoped for something more interesting, they only began to talk of the best kind of oil-cake for feeding bullocks. Captain Brand joined now and then in their conversation, and left me in peace.

The Abbé had written to his sister before we started, and had enclosed the letter which my mother had consigned to the care of Captain Brand, so Madame La Peyre would have had some warning of my arrival.

"Here is Merdon station at last," says Captain Brand.

I am very unwilling to rouse myself. The two old gentlemen do not move, but go on with their talk; evidently they are not Merdon people. Captain Brand folds his newspaper very neatly, collects our

bags and wraps, jumps out, and then hands me out.

He makes some inquiry, and then he turns to me—

"There is no fly, and the house is quite near, so perhaps you will not mind walking. Are you very tired?"

There is that tender sound in his voice which always irritates me. I will not look at him.

"Not very," and I move towards the white gate behind the station, to show him I am ready.

I follow Captain Brand up the steep road from the station in a sleepy, stupefied way, but when we come to the end of it I stop and look about me. The road opens upon a sudden space shaded by tall elmtrees. These stand in groups of three and four, apart from one another, and leave plenty of space for sunlight to fall on large trunks of prostrate trees below—timber so gray that it looks as if it had

lain there stripped of its bark ever since some of the whitewashed stone cottages round it were first built. In the centre of the space is an old iron pump, with a grey stone trough in front; but it looks dry and unused. The granite church stands on ground a little above the rest. A flight of steps in the low grey stone wall just opposite the pump leads up into the churchyard. At first it seems as if there were about six houses in Merdon: the thought comes to me that it is a charming picture, but a lifeless one. It reminds me of a toy of trees and cottages I played with when a child—the cottages showing in and out among the circle of trees, as if they were having a game of hide-and-seek. As I look farther I see that this game of hide-and-seek is a feature of the village; cottages nestle behind the tree trunks, then down a sudden turn between two cottages we come upon three or four little dwellings set at right angles, VOL. I.

with apple-trees in a tiny garden, the branches borne down with a weight of russet fruit.

When we reach the pump I see that the ground slopes abruptly to another group of elms, which, although rooted at a much lower level, tower up as high as those which stand on the rise above. In this valley is a little stream, where the Merdon ducks are splashing and fighting, and into which some girls are dipping quaint red pitchers to get water. Captain Brand stands still when we reach the edge of the steep descent. A girl in a red petticoat and white cotton bonnet with a deep curtain hanging from it, and partly shading her face, turns round when she has filled her pitcher and climbs up the bank.

Captain Brand goes forward to speak to her, but I stand still; I like to look at the sweet, peaceful scene. On the other side of the stream is a carpenter's shop, thatched like the other cottages, the old thatch patched here and there with new; the wall,



instead of being stone, is wooden, and at one end has so fallen to decay that only the upright poles are left standing. A vine has clambered up one end of the long shed, and flung itself on the mossy thatch. A blue cart with red wheels lies in front: a flight of wooden steps bridges over the little stream. Just within the open doorway two puppies are at play on the shaving-strewed floor. Above the cottage roofs in the hollow, I get a vision of sloping green hills and dark woods; at my feet struts a hen with her family; the family consists of three small ducks: she clucks with all the importance of a fussy dowager, and the ducks waddle in her wake, but every now and then instinct gets the better of duty, and they slip into the little stream and swim there merrily.

But the trees delight me; they are so grand, so stately, and they give broad deep shadow. I never saw such trees before. The sun, even at the hottest, could not

filter through the closely-leaved boughs and twigs that cross and recross overhead.

Captain Brand has finished questioning the girl. "Madame La Peyre's house is this way; it is not far off."

He looks over his shoulder at me; this action reminds me of that dreadful moment when he carried my darling mother from the sinking ship; but he has begun to descend the bank to the stream.

A wild thought comes and rouses me,—here is an opportunity; if I run away in this strange place, where no one knows me, I may hide myself till Captain Brand has gone. I know he must be in London tomorrow. I look round, and then a quite common, vulgar obstacle fetters me—I have scarcely any money. Captain Brand told me on board the *Eclair* that he had some property my mother had given him to take care of for me. He was too wise, doubtless, to trust me with it till I am safe with Madame La Peyre. Well, we shall

see what I can do then; Madame cannot tie me by the leg. But while I stand thinking Captain Brand has come to a halt, and is waiting for me.

"Madame La Peyre lives down there," he says, still over his shoulder, and he goes down the steep path towards the stream.

We pass a half-ruined wooden cottage with a plank bridge over the water; we go on alongside of the clear stream, so clear that the many-coloured stones shine like jewels in its bed, and then we come to a little wooden bridge with a thicket of tall purple flowers on each side of it. I love flowers, and I long to gather some of these, they look so feathery, crowning their tall spikes of narrow green leaves; but the Captain goes on so fast that I am obliged to follow him. We go across a field-for it looks like a field made into a kitchen garden-with potatoes on one side, starred with exquisite white and purple flowers and a tall hedge of scarlet beans on the other hand. The path is stony, but I do not heed this. every side hill rises over hill in varied shape and colour; some bright green slopes, chequered with golden squares ready for reaping; then cutting across these another hill rises abruptly and turns a long shoulder of moor on its neighbour. I have never seen colour like this before; the rich purple which I guess to be heather, mingles with orange and a velvet-like brown, and in the midst huge masses of a cold grey granite, so fantastic in shape and with such an abundance of scattered fragments that it seems as if giants have been pelting one another and have been petrified in the midst of their game.

There is something weird in the contrast of the smiling green and golden slopes with the barren moor and its rugged tenants. But a group of ash-trees stands before us and shuts out the distant view.

Captain Brand holds open a gate, and we go on under the shade of the ash-trees,

which rise from hedges on each side of the Such hedges are new to me; they seem to be built up of fragments of granite topped with hazel and hawthorn bushes, but so thick a growth of ferns and mosses clusters out between the fragments of stone that their presence is only revealed by an occasional grey morsel peeping between the delicate fronds of black maiden-hair, as if to see the world. I gather the ferns greedily; many of them are as new to me as the wild flowers are. I have just made a lovely nosegay with rosy flowers in the midst, when Captain Brand turns down a descent which opens suddenly on our right, between low stone walls so sharply and abruptly that I wonder how horses can go down it, yet the road is full of cart-ruts. The wall on the right is ivygrown; over it I get a glimpse of the farmbuildings; a little farther on we come to a stile in the wall, made of two huge granite blocks set one rather above the other. Captain Brand vaults over this like a boy, and



then holds out his hand to help me; but I do not care to be helped. He looks rather surprised when I jump from the topmost stone. I dare say he thinks me a hoyden, but his opinion is of no consequence to me.

We find ourselves in a grassed orchard with a narrow path leading down to a gate.

I never saw such an up and down country as this seems to be; there does not appear to be any level ground.

Captain Brand goes forward and opens the gate, and then he stands still with a puzzled look on his face. I fancy he is very neat and particular, and I almost laugh at his dismay. If this is the entrance it is unlike all I have heard of English habits. A large square yard with sheds at the sides, littered with dirty straw; in the midst a huge stone trough, at which some black pigs are feeding; but how different from the pigs of Château Fontaine—these are round, plump, and short-legged, just like grown-up sucking pigs. Facing us on the

opposite side of the yard is the farmhouse, but seemingly the back view of it, for only one window appears, and a quaint projecting stone porch with a gable and square moulding over the doorway. We stand hesitating. Presently a figure moves in the shadow within the porch, and then the low wicket in front of it is drawn inward, and a tall woman comes a few steps forward; very tall, very thin, with a reddish skin and dark eyes; she has thin pinched lips and a high narrow forehead. I know by instinct, as well as by the jacket, and skirt and cap, that, though she is quite unlike her daughter, this woman is Rosalie's mother, la mère Angélique.

She stands waiting our approach with a stately courtesy, a half smile on her straight lips, but no welcome in her eyes, and yet as I look directly into them I see good expressive eyes, which could show love if la mère Angélique would let them. I have none of the antipathy towards her which I

expected, only I shrink nervously from the scrutiny of those piercing dark eyes. She curtsies first to me, and then to Captain Brand.

"Servante, mam'selle et m'sieur. Madame waits in the salon."

Captain Brand bends his tall head and passes under the arched porch. I notice that its floor, and even that of the room into which it leads through a wide passage, are paved with a hard stone-like substance.

The room into which she brings us looks like a kitchen; the walls are of black shining wood. From the open, heavy-beamed ceiling hang hams, huge pieces of bacon, and bundles of herbs. A fire burns on the open hearth, just as I had seen it in the rooms at Château Fontaine, only here a hook hangs down from the chimney and holds a huge pot boiling over the blazing logs; a wooden bench is fixed on each side, and the wall is built out so as to leave two comfortable screened seats actually within the fireplace.



An old helpless-looking man sits on one of these seats, with a small round table before him; opposite is a scarlet curtain, and in front of this a little golden-haired child of a year old is swinging in a tiny chair suspended from one of the beams. It is so blue-eyed, so like a lovely cherub, that I forget all my timidity and the pending introduction to Madame La Peyre.

I slip away from Angélique, and kiss and hug the little darling.

"It is a pretty child, is it not, Gertrude?" I bite my lip with vexation; Captain Brand has come back to where I stand, and he is smiling, and I always try to repress any show of feeling before him.

"Yes," I say indifferently.

We pass through a very small door, and step down a stone step into Madame La Peyre's room. Not a pretty room in itself; the floor seems to have sunk, the windows are, I think, unnaturally near the low ceiling—such strange windows, wide and low,

and divided into small compartments filled with diamond-shaped panes. There is, however, a certain brightness about the arrangements—vases of flowers on the table and on the low bookcases round the walls. The seat below the window is cushioned with bright eastern-looking stuff, and from this rises up a lady, for whom I feel a liking at once.

She is dressed in black silk, and wears on her head a tasteful cap of some delicate lace, with just a little soft coloured pink ribbon.

She comes forward, makes a deep curtsy to Captain Brand, and then she puts her arms round me and kisses me on both cheeks. Her skin feels as soft as velvet. She looks the impersonation of daintiness. Her hair is grey, almost white, but it must once have been very dark; her eyebrows are still black, and her eyes are dark and shining. I do not think she has been what is called a beauty, but there is a soft liquid light in her eyes which is irresistible. No squareness of brow, nothing to give hardness, but such a mixture of sweetness with arch vivacity in the deep-set eyes and in the mobile smiling mouth; such grace in her small slender figure, even in the movements of her delicate little hands, that I am at once captivated. There is a charm in her manner that fascinates me—a softness, a grace, a something so opposed to the square ponderousness of the English—or is it that I find in any French person a link to Eugène? No, not in Rosalie; but I forget her; and there must be exceptions to everything.

"You are very welcome, my dear Gertrude," she says in such pretty English; then to my companion, "She is so like her mother." Madame keeps her arms round my waist and looks at Captain Brand. I feel quite tall beside her. Then, before we are seated, Angélique appears at a door opposite to that by which we have come in.

"Madame will be served directly," she says, in her grave earnest voice. "Mademoiselle will have the goodness to follow me."

I follow her; only as I climb up the broad uneven staircase I resolve that Angélique shall not treat me as if I were a child.

We arrive at the end of such a long gallery that I see the house is much larger than I had fancied.

"Entrez, Mademoiselle."

Angélique opens the door of a large room with a high coved ceiling, with carved ornaments upon it and on the mantelpiece, which tell of an old date.

"This is Madame's room," she explains;
"Mademoiselle sleeps beside her." She
crosses the vast room, too large to sleep in,
I think, and opens a door on the further side
of a great canopied bed.

"Voilà pour Mademoiselle."

A pretty, cosy little room, beautifully fresh-looking, but I see no separate en-

trance. I feel rebellious. I am to be cooped up, am I, like a chicken?

I stoop down to look out of the window, which is sunk and deeply recessed, and see a sight which puts Angélique and Madame La Peyre out of remembrance.

My window looks out on open country, hill rises behind hill, and a chain of strangely-shaped abrupt peaks ends my view; the last of these is higher, and has a wider summit than the rest, and over it hangs a sort of mist, which has a strong fascination for me, but which makes me feel sad and full of foreboding. I have no time to look at the lovely foreground of this scene, for Angélique rouses me.

"Mademoiselle can look out to-morrow—the day after—when she will; but now she let me unpack her bags—will she have the kindness to arrange herself for dinner?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEXT MOBNING.

It is not bright sunshine as it was yesterday. I look out of my bedroom window, and I see a grey veil of driving rain between me and those far-off hills, but still I can make out that they are there; and also I see the dark, melancholy, far-stretching height. Madame La Peyre told me last night it is called Dartmoor. I wish it were not so far off; it seems to draw me to it with a sad, mysterious influence, and yet I usually shrink from sadness. Is a fresh grief to come to me in Merdon?

I go downstairs and find Madame at the breakfast-table. She has not any pink

ribbons in her cap this morning, it is muslin edged with lace.

She kisses me so tenderly.

"I hope you have slept well, my child. You see," she points to the breakfast-table, "I conform to English habits. I lived so many years in England in my youth, that I am glad to return to some of its fashions."

While she speaks I feel that in one rapid glance Madame La Peyre has taken a survey of my face and my dress. I look round; there is no one else in the room.

"Your guardian went away very early this morning," Madame La Peyre says.

I hear this with a feeling of relief. When I said a hurried good-bye to Captain Brand last night, I had a dread that he would re-appear. I am so glad he is gone without lecturing me, as I expected he would, about my conduct at Château Fontaine. I do not know whether it is right or wrong, but when I am not scolded for anything I feel guilty about, I lose any mistyol. I.

giving I may have had, and feel quite justified in what I have done. I suppose I have not any real conscience. After all, Eugène must know what is right better than Captain Brand can.

Last night I told Madame La Peyre all about my home in Tasmania. She would not let me speak of my voyage in the ship. She said, with her sweet bright smile, that I must never take sad thoughts to bed with me.

"You have slept well, my sweet child," she says this morning; "your eyes tell me so. I shall have to freshen myself up, Gertrude, to keep pace with your young spirits."

And then she gives me as mischievous a glance from beneath her eyelashes as if she were seventeen.

"My dear," she says, confidentially, when Angélique has taken away the breakfast, "that gentleman, the Captain, is a very young guardian for you; very young and very good-looking." She gives me a quick little look, while she arranges some flowers in a vase.

"Young! Madame, why, Captain Brand is quite middle-aged," I was going to say old, but a look at Madame's grey hair checks me; "and I think him plain."

Madame La Peyre laughs softly to herself. I fancy she has a way of doing this; it makes me a little shy of her. I hope she is not satirical.

"Captain Brand is not more than thirty-five," she says quietly; "I think he is a very fine man, with a good and noble countenance."

"Well, I have not looked at him very carefully." Madame La Peyre is looking at me curiously, but I am sure she does not know anything about the marriage. I hope Captain Brand will not tell her when he comes back; he said he should see me before he sails again. I must not leave him alone with Madame La Peyre, and then he cannot tell her; or, better still, I

shall tell him I wish that matter kept secret.

Madame says she must go to her invalid—I have heard from Angélique that a sister of Madame's lives with her. She comes back soon with some embroidery—such delicate, beautiful work; how skilful she is at it!

"We have only a few rooms in this farm-house, Gertrude, so you must be content when you are indoors, to sit here or in your bedroom. You shall go and see my sister Mrs. Dayrell, but I do not think it good for you to be much with a person who is so ill. Now I want to hear how you like Château Fontaine."

"It is delightful, and I can't tell you how fond I am of the Abbé. I like everything in it except Rosalie."

Madame La Peyre laughed.

"Poor Rosalie! you do not like her; she is really the most harmless creature possible; the poor child was born at Château Fontaine, and she is privileged, because she has not quite the same wits as others. Do not let Angélique know that you dislike Rosalie, she is her only and well-beloved child."

I did not answer. It seemed to me that Madame La Peyre studied her servants too much, and Rosalie was more than ever repulsive to me now I knew she was half-witted.

"And my brother's pupil, was he not at Château-Fontaine?"

"Yes."

Madame La Peyre looked up from her needlework, but I dared not meet her eyes. A sudden rush of warm colour swept upwards to my very temples.

I could not sit there beside her quick, observant eyes. I jumped up and knelt on the cushioned seat, so that I could look out of the window. The hills were not to be seen from it; I only saw a small garden, stuffed so full of flowers and box-edgings that it looked choked. It was hedged by a thick wall of holly.

"Well, Gertrude,"-Madame La Peyre

had waited a little—" and how do you like Monsieur de Vaucresson?"

The question was confusing, but there was something in it that at once put me at ease with Madame La Peyre. I had not seen many people, but still at luncheon at home I had seen mothers with their daughters, and middle-aged ladies, and it occurred to me that these ladies had never talked to me about gentlemen. I felt Madame La Peyre's question to be more in consonance with my own age than with hers.

"I like him very much," but I still looked out of the window.

"He is a favourite of mine," she said.

"He is so handsome, and he knows so well how to behave to women, and young men of his age do not always know this. I am sure he was very courteous to you, was he not, Gertrude?"

[&]quot; Oh, yes."

[&]quot;Ah! but for the Revolution, he would have a fine property; but though there are

fine estates, the family will never recover all that once belonged to them. It is a sad position to be of the *haute noblesse* and to have small means."

"Is Monsieur de Vaucresson the head of his family?"

"Yes, he is, but his mother rules and will rule everything till he is five-and-twenty. She is a clever woman, but so haughty and determined. I think, Gertrude, women should be gentle, and sweet, and yielding; they should never choose for themselves."

I do not know what possessed me, I think it was that the warmth and brightness of her manner drew me on to confidence, spite of myself.

"May they not choose their husbands, Madame?" I said it saucily, but I felt my cheeks glow, and mine is such a colourless face that I fancy blushing betrays me easily.

Madame La Peyre let her embroidery fall in her lap, and looked at me in gentle wonder. "My child, you are not serious; it is not possible that my excellent friend has brought her daughters up with false ideas. In the lower class of life women may choose for themselves, but even then the affair is usually arranged by their parents, but for you it would be impossible."

I looked at her.

"Do you mean, Madame, that it is better not to choose for oneself? Did you not choose Monsieur La Peyre?" I spoke stubbornly. I felt in worse bondage than ever. She raised her eyebrows with a little gentle surprise.

"Mon Dieu! no, my child. I never saw Monsieur La Peyre till my mother presented him to me as my future husband. A young girl must not think about love, or marriage either, till it becomes her duty to do so."

"I am sure love is not a duty," I said, passionately; "it is a natural feeling, which comes all at once of itself."

I did not look at Madame La Peyre this time. I stared hard into the holly-hedge, and became aware that I was behaving like a goose. Instead of getting my new guardian on my side—and I can make people like me if I try—I am only tightening my chain. She will, of course, consider my opinions dangerous and unsuitable, and will uphold my marriage, if she hears of it. If I had only been quiet and gentle I might have won her to my side, for I am sure she has a loving nature.

I knelt upon the cushioned seat and waited for my lecture; but it did not come. Instead I heard a little soft sigh. I looked down into Madame La Peyre's face, and I saw her sweet dark eyes swimming with tears.

People may say what they choose, I think when the eyes are sweet in middle age it is a sweetness far beyond any youthful beauty, it has such a steadfast, restful charm, you are not afraid that it will be chased by

an impatient frown, a pouting under-lip, or a fretful droop of the whole countenance.

"My poor dear Gertrude," she says, so tenderly that I slide down into the seat beside her, almost without my own will. "You have been thrown on the world too young; it is terrible for a woman!"

She puts her arm round me, and I nestle my head on her shoulder. For an instant I seem to have found my mother again. Presently she says, softly—

- "How old are you, my Gertrude?"
- "I was sixteen in the Spring."
- "Ah, you will not need to marry just yet."

I am silent; I feel that Madame La Peyre guesses my secret, and that she sympathises with it. I think if I had remembered Eugène's promised letter at that moment I should have told her of it.

"It is always unfortunate," she says, after a little, "when love comes before marriage; it is better that the husband's image should be the first that reflects itself in the heart of a young girl."

I am rebellious, but I cannot look at her. I cover my face with my hands.

"I only believe in first love, Madame, and I will never marry where I do not love."

Madame La Peyre bends over me and strokes my hair.

"You are a dear honest child, Gertrude, but you are more impulsive than your mother was."

The door opens and Angélique comes in, and hands a note to Madame La Peyre. This bonne seems to me still more remarkable looking than I had thought her yesterday. She is very grave, but there is no sternness in her face. Her eyes are usually downcast, but she raises them as she speaks to her mistress, and they look lovingly at her. She is, I think, perfectly unconscious of her own distinguished appearance. She moves quietly about the room, doing humble little menial offices, while she waits for an answer to the note.

"I will not write"—Madame La Peyre looks up at her tall maid. "You can say that Mademoiselle will pay a visit to Madame very soon."

Angélique goes out of the room without looking at me. I think she is too dignified for a servant, and I say so to Madame La Peyre. Again she laughs in the soft, silent way which so disconcerts me.

"My child, you do not understand la mère Angélique. She is as unconscious of her dignity as she is unconscious that anyone could think her worthy of special notice. If you were sick or sorrowful, Gertrude, then she would make you the chief object of her care; but she sees you young, and bright, and happy, and she does not intrude herself; I have no doubt she will pray for you, my child."

I remember Rosalie's warning.

"She is a kind of saint, is she not?" I say it mockingly, for in those days my idea of a saint was of a person who said long

prayers, and sat in judgment on his or her neighbours.

"She does not think herself one, but she is very good; but I shall leave you and Angélique to make friends as you please. I know you will like her. Now, if you are willing, we will go to my invalid, Madame Dayrell."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INVALID.

MRS. DAYRELL'S room is opposite to mine, on the other side of the gallery.

"How is she your sister, Madame?" I ask, as we go up-stairs.

"My husband's mother married twice. Her second husband was an Englishman—Mr. Dayrell. This lady married my half brother-in-law, Henri Dayrell."

"Is she English?"

Madame nods, and opens the door.

It is a large pleasant room, but I scarcely see anything in it except the invalid. Mrs. Dayrell lies on a sofa near the open window. She looks young, and as if she had been beautiful, but she is now too wasted

and haggard for beauty. She has large blue eyes, but there is a wild dilated expression in them which troubles me; her long fair hair streams round her shoulders, and sets her face in a golden frame. I suppose she has had a good complexion, but it is too hectic now. There is a painful unrest in her whole face which to me destroys its charm. She looks at me discontentedly.

"You are Gertrude, are you? Why did you not come to me sooner? I thought you were a little girl—a child—not a grown-up person. Ah! I don't believe anyone ever had so many disappointments as I have had."

I stand still and feel very uncomfortable, as if it were a fault to be grown-up; but Madame La Peyre goes to the sofa, turns the cushions under Mrs. Dayrell's shoulders, and speaks in a bright voice—

"Is she not a tall girl for sixteen, my Barbara; but look at her eyes, and thou wilt not be disappointed—they are childish enough. My idea is that we shall not easily succeed in making her a femme raisonnable. What dost thou think? is it worth while to try?"

Such a mocking smile curves Mrs. Dayrell's lips.

"I do not see how thou canst try in this lonely desert," she speaks French to Madame La Peyre. "It is only the world and the bondage of society that will do either, and she will find neither restraint nor society here; she will only vegetate."

The first troubled look I have seen comes on Madame La Peyre's face.

"But yes, my Barbara, she will find restraints here, as she will find them everywhere; it is not good for us women to be without them."

The flush deepens on Mrs. Dayrell's face.

"Are you going to let Angélique keep her in order and preach to her?"

She says this so bitterly, that I look

up at Madame La Peyre with a sudden suspicion that Mrs. Dayrell is unkindly treated. Madame smiles at me.

"I do not think Angélique preaches to anyone, Barbara; and this dear Gertrude has not thy powers of argument. She and Angélique will live side by side all tranquilly. I fancy she will only get preached to if she tears her gowns among the Tors, and it seems to me probable that this may happen. Allons, my child, we will go and make acquaintance with Merdon. As yet you have only seen it through the window."

I follow her to the door.

"Come back here a moment." Mrs. Dayrell speaks in so despotic a manner that I obey unwillingly. "Stoop down, child;" and then she whispers, "Come by yourself next time."

Madame La Peyre has not even looked back; she stands holding the door open for me to pass out. I feel very uncomfortable. There is something weird and painful in the look of those strained eyes and that long lifeless figure, with its white drapery and fair flowing hair.

Is Mrs. Dayrell mad, I wonder, and is Angélique her keeper? She seems unhappy and she has a strange and flighty manner, but I do not think she is mad. I try to speak of her to Madame La Peyre when at last we go out of the house, and by a short way to the village, but she does not hear what I say, she is looking instead towards the little gate of the churchyard. Some one is sitting there, but he does not see us; at least I think he does not, for he comes down the steps whistling, with his hands in his pockets, and takes the road that curves round towards the station.

"Who is that?" The sight of that youth—I do not think he is much older than Eugène—cheers me, for Mrs. Dayrell's description of Merdon life has made me feel depressed.

"He is our squire, Mr. Newton; but

this is not his only property, so we do not see much of him."

"But he calls on you sometimes?"

Madame La Peyre considers me with one of those provoking smiles, and then she says, quietly, "Yes, he called two days ago with his tutor to say good-bye—he is going away from Merdon."

I feel rather vexed—I do not know why. I certainly have plenty to think of, and I have to look forward to Eugène's letter. Why do I trouble myself about this young squire's absence? He is short, and he has red cheeks and black whiskers, and I dislike rosy-faced men, they are so like apples. But Merdon will be very dull if there is nothing young in it. I want to go scrambling among those grey rocks I see, but I cannot expect Madame La Peyre to scramble, and it is not much fun to scramble by oneself.

We walk past the church in silence. It occurs to me I may as well find out where I

shall have to ask for Eugène's letter.

- "Which is the post-office, Madame?"
- "We have passed it."

I suppose I look disappointed, for she turns back at once, and leads the way to one of the cottages with the apple-tree before its window. She pushes open the garden-gate and goes in. The letter-box is fixed just beside the open window. A sunburnt old man stands beside a desk within, but he is so eagerly intent on speaking to some one in the room that he does not even hear our footsteps outside. Madame La Peyre stops beneath the window.

"I should like for to know what a Papist can tell about the good God, as ye call He, a-tellin' I as lumbago be sent for good! Nonsense! tellee 'tain't; pain and sin and ill-favouredness is all bad—no good in any of they. Ne'er a one o' the three comes from above; they's sent direct from t'other place."

"My good Samuel," comes in Angélique's

calm, clear, broken English, "I am grieve to have vex you; instead I wish to give you comfort, believe me. Will you that I come this night and put to your lumbago one famous plaster, which I have the great secret to make?"

Samuel growls to himself, but I see him shake his head.

"Ee means well, I know; but, Mrs. Angelick, I be goin' seventy, an' I be not a-goin' to try new remedies at my years. Jint ile did for my father and my grandfather afore he, an' I sticks to 'un. No offence to ye, Ma'am, but it 'ud be putting too great an affront on they to give in to furrin doctoring. Jint ile is all the cure I ever looks to."

"It is no offence, my good Samuel, and I wish that you may not suffer your pain beyond your power to bear it. Adieu."

Angélique comes out of the door, but she disappears into the next cottage.

"Drat the woman!" Samuel does not yet

see us so near the window; "hur don't think small beer o' hurself Can't hur see hur ain't got the right way o' looking at the complaint. I says lumbago be a cuss, no doubt on't; and hur say it be a blessin'. If hur goes a-doctorin' lumbago for a blessin', safe as a bank 'twill turn 'un to a cuss. Drat all Papists! I can't abide they."

Madame La Peyre nods at me, and we go in at the door. This opens into a large square room, floored with the same kind of stone that I had noticed at Madame La Peyre's, and which Madame told me was lime ash. The room looks very neat and pretty; there is the same large open fireplace, but no fire in it, and on the mantelshelf above, and in a corner cupboard beside the window, I see some quaint-looking blue and white crockery. The window attracts me, a table filled with flowers stands beneath it, and in the centre of these is a creeping plant I never saw before, covered with blue bell-shaped blos-

soms: I turn round to ask Madame La Peyre its name, but she has gone into the office through an open doorway on the right. The view is so lovely from the window that I wonder how anyone can block it out, even with flowers. I go in to look at Samuel. He is quite different from what I expected. Tall, thin, and reverendlooking, with white hair, and a clear sunburnt face. His eyes are small, and set too near together, and his lips press each other so tightly that they are colourless; but he looks incapable of uttering the harsh judgment he passed on Angélique just now.

Madame La Peyre must have been speaking of me, for when I come in she says, "Here is the young lady, Samuel; she only left my brother yesterday. You know Monsieur l'Abbé, do you not, Samuel?"

I think I see his face twist as he bows over his desk to Madame La Peyre. I suppose he says to himself, "Another Papist!" I wonder he does not offer us chairs.

"Has the young lady any pitticklar business with the post-office, ma'am?"

He gives me such a keen, cunning look that I feel myself blushing.

"She will have letters," says Madame, sweetly. "Your father will write to you, Gertrude, and your sisters?—and perhaps your guardian."

"Yes." And then a rapid thought comes to help me. "Mr. Samuel, I prefer to come and get my letters myself. They will be addressed to the post-office, to Miss Stewart or Miss Gertrude Stewart."

I see Samuel's eyes give a sudden twinkle, he blows his nose ostentatiously, looking over his handkerchief at Madame La Peyre, but she is not watching him. She laughs at me, and says, teasingly,

"You strange girl! I suppose you think it will be a little daily event to come here and ask for letters; but you will have to write and give your new address."

"Oh! no; I have given it already. I have so few correspondents that I shall scarcely need to come once a week even; but still I prefer to come myself." I look very decidedly at Samuel, and I do not like his face. It seems to me my frankness must silence his suspicions, but he half closes one eye as he listens, and I feel guilty as I turn away.

CHAPTER XIX.

I TAKE A WALK.

THE rainy weather has lasted a week.

Mrs. Dayrell has been so ill that I have not seen her again. I grow each day fonder of Madame La Peyre; but I begin to find it very dull to be cooped up in one room all day. I want to go out, in spite of the rain.

"Yes, afterwards," says Madame; "but you cannot go out alone at first; you may lose yourself, my child. Angélique or I will guide you a little, and then you will be free to choose your own walks, for Mrs. Tracey tells me young ladies may go for little walks alone here—you will meet no one."

I sigh at this; it is a dreary prospect to see no one new in-doors or out. I am sure, if I do not get some amusement, I shall do something mischievous.

It is afternoon now, and the rain is leaving off; the clouds are parting and drifting away. Where do clouds go to, I wonder? I stand watching till at last there is a bit of blue sky.

"Madame, really we can get a walk; in two more minutes it will be quite fine."

Angélique opens the door.

"Monsieur Newton and Monsieur Donald," she says, in her quaint accent.

Something new at last! All my repressed spirits dance up into my eyes; I can hardly restrain an exclamation. I have time to look at the visitors while Madame is receiving them. Mr. Newton is the gentleman I saw at the churchyard. He is certainly very pippin-faced, and his young black whiskers are like curled-up fur on each side of his face; I do not feel interested in

him; he is short, and he has a kind of face which you see all at once, there is nothing to find out in it but black, and white, and red. I look on to the tutor; he is younger than I expected, certainly much younger than Captain Brand. He is ugly -at least, he has a sallow, slip-shod kind of face, by which I mean a face that has loose skin about the chin and forehead—a face that has a whimsical mouth, which seems hesitating between a laugh and a cry, and a nose that looks as if it may be made to take any shape. He is tall, and awkward; he moves his shoulders nervously, and does not seem to know what to do with his hands; and yet this queer Dominie Sampson-looking creature interests me much more than the red-cheeked pupil. do so dislike red cheeks in a man.

Madame La Peyre presents these gentlemen to me, and then we all sit down. Mr. Newton looks at me quite coolly, as if I were a picture, or a bit of china, but Mr. Donald looks away directly I meet his eyes.

"I thought you had departed," says. Madame.

"But we are back again, you see. We find Merdon more attractive than Starmouth; at least," Mr. Newton pulls his whiskers, "I do."

He looks at me with an attempt at an impressive expression in his brown, dog-like eyes. I cannot help laughing to myself, as I contrast this young Englishman with Eugène. How downright and ungraceful he is in his way of paying a compliment; he must be very young, or he is quite unused to girls. I look at him mischievously.

"Is Merdon attractive? I fancied I should find it dull. What do you find attractive in it?" I ask, innocently.

Madame La Peyre looks surprised; I suppose she wonders that I speak so easily to a stranger—doubtless at home I should

have waited—but I have been so dull, and this chance may not come again soon, I cannot stop myself, and there is Mr. Donald for her to talk to.

I see Mr. Newton is not quite so silly as I thought he was. At least, he looks mischievous.

"Ah, we have had rain ever since you came. Rain is a bore, of course, to ladies; you have not been out much. Wait till you have seen our Cleave, and some of the rides in our neighbourhood; the roads are first-rate. I"—his voice gives a little flourish here, which nearly makes me laugh—"I shall be most delighted, if you like riding, to give you a mount; I have some horses quite fit for a lady's riding."

"I don't know much about riding, thank you; I prefer walking. From the little I have seen, I should think walking is best here. I want to climb some of those great grey rocks, and you cannot do that on horse-back."

"Not exactly. Well, then, if you walk, you had better let me guide you. I know every inch of the ground, and I will take awful care of you."

He looks at me in such a fatherly, protecting way, that I am determined to tease him. I believe he thinks I am a child. I must teach him his mistake. I look from him to Mr. Donald, and I am startled at the intense gaze I meet. This awkward, plain man is not ugly really, he has beautiful dark blue eyes—eyes that look full of gentle, sentimental thoughts.

"My dear,"—Madame has been talking to the tutor—"I have been asking Mr. Donald to recommend me a list of English books for your reading, and he is so kind as to offer to lend you some."

I smile at Mr. Donald. He is evidently very shy, poor fellow, and I feel inclined to be kind to him, and to make him like me. I can't help trying to make everyone like me.

"Thank you very much."

Mr. Donald looks pleased.

"You must tell me the kind of reading you prefer, and I will try to suit your taste. I have some books likely to suit you, I think." He speaks very modestly, and yet I am sure he is clever; he has that clear, refined way of speaking, which clever people generally have.

"I like poetry and novels."

Madame La Peyre looks at me, and then she gives one of her pretty soft laughs.

"You must not trust her judgment; but I do not imagine that you, Monsieur, read romances."

I keep my eyes on Mr. Donald, and he is actually blushing.

"I am afraid I must plead guilty; I enjoy a well-written novel," he says, laughing; "but I do not think the novels I have will hurt Miss Stewart."

I have forgotten Mr. Newton, till a yawn calls my attention to him.

"Donald's a great reader, I assure you," he says. "Novels are well enough, but I can't stand poetry; it's all alike, and there's so much time wasted in going through it and trying to understand it. I only read the story parts; the rest is a bore. But our family don't go in for extra learning, do we, Mr. Donald?"

"So you tell me."

I fancy there is a little mockery in the tutor's voice, but Mr. Newton's sentence has taken me back to Van Diemen's Land. I have grown lately to forget what there seemed so natural, that one's family creed is the only reliable standard of right and wrong. I blush with a mixture of shame and nervousness, and try to remember whether our family cares for poetry. As far as I can recollect, with the exception of our governess, no one read anything at home, except the newspapers, unless it was a book by some titled amateur. I know papa used to tell me he cared more for singing than for any other acquirement. The Abbé and Madame La Peyre seem to



be of a different way of thinking; but then they have lived in retirement, and I have heard people say that my father is a complete man of the world. I do not quite know what that means, but it must be, of course, something very clever.

"Are you going out to-day, Madame?"
Mr. Newton asks Madame La Peyre, in a restless voice. He does not seem quite at his ease in a drawing-room, though he has such a superior, patronizing manner. I thought only under-bred people gave themselves this sort of lofty airs; and then I remember my own behaviour to Captain Brand, and I try to think of something else; it is not pleasant to find myself in the wrong. I have no pretensions to being extra-good, I have a horror of that sort of thing, but I cannot see how a person who is born a lady can bear to be rude.

"We were thinking of taking a walk when you came in—shall we go, Gertrude?"



"Oh, yes, if you please."

I will not give Madame La Peyre the chance of changing her mind. I dart off for my hat, but I stay an instant before the glass to see that I have put it on well. Angélique has trimmed it with crape; she said it made me look pale, but to-day I have plenty of colour. This walk will be delightful. I can hardly count how long it is since I took a country walk with some one of my own age. There was that ramble with Eugène. Ah! but that was very different. It is not Mr. Newton who will make this walk pleasant; it is the walk that will make me glad of him for a companion.

I find our sitting-room empty, so I go out into the court. Mr. Newton is leaning against the gate.

"Miss Stewart, I want to take you to the Cleave"—he looked very important —"by a way that has been in our family for centuries." "Centuries! Why, do you date from the ancient Britons?"

"Ah well, that word is a figure of speech. I mean ever so long, you know."

I feel mischievous.

"I suppose you can tell me all sorts of legends about these misshapen Tors?" I say, inquiringly.

"You must ask my tutor that kind of thing; he cares for reading—I don't. You see, education is necessary for the middle classes. I only go in for manly pursuits—riding and cricket, and so on."

I feel puzzled. I begin to look up to Mr. Newton as an authority, he asserts his opinion so positively. He is certainly much cleverer than I am. He could not speak in such a positive, superior way unless he felt he was really clever.

"I thought reading was more a man's pursuit than a woman's—a lofty pursuit,

in fact; I mean real deep reading," I say shyly.

Mr. Newton looks at me with an approving smile. I feel so glad to have been right.

"Ah! yes, yes,—oh, yes, you are right there; women who are great readers are awful—they bore you frightfully; it don't suit them at all. I have an aunt who can't talk of anything but books; and then she don't read the paper, or anything jolly; awful bore. Why, she actually didn't know who won the Derby last Spring!"

I feel horribly ignorant.

"What did?" I look up into Mr. Newton's eyes with reverence.

He laughed. "Oh, Coronation, of course. But why shouldn't we start? I'll tell Donald to wait for Madame. He has gone on to look at this view farther up the lane. He is new to this country, you know. We'll go on."

Mr. Newton is looking at me quite as



admiringly as Eugène did; but he stares much more. I wonder which is the eldest; I think Mr. Newton is, though his face is younger; but he talks more like a man, and he is much calmer than Eugène was.

We come suddenly on Mr. Donald, leaning on a gate, looking at the country. I should like to stand and look too at the splendid range of hills—my friend, that misty, melancholy Dartmore, always ending the view—but Mr. Newton will not stop.

"I say, Donald," he calls out as we pass, "will you bring Madame La Peyre after us? I am going up the hill-field to the top of the Cleave. If this is too steep for Madame she can rest in the field, you know."

We pass through the village, then up a steep bit of high road, across a wooded hill, with lovely peeps of distant view here and there between the trees, and then we come to a gate. Mr. Newton opens it, and we pass into a shady lane.

If the walk is all to be like this lane it will be delightful—a steep path with trees meeting overhead, so that we are sheltered from the sun, which blazes fiercely, as if he were making up for his long absence. The way is so choked with huge blocks of granite that one has constantly to scramble over them.

I sit down at last on a grey fragment with black and brown stains, orange and silver lichens blistering the surface here and there.

"Where do these bits of rock come from?" I ask.

"No one knows; I suppose they grow. But this is nothing to what you will see in the Cleave. Donald will talk to you by the yard about these formations, as he calls them; that's geology, you know. But what does it matter how they come? They're an awful nuisance; they only cumber the land and keep it barren for acres."

I point to the ferns niched in every avail-

able cranny of the piled-up hedge-bank.

"Ah! you mean those plants, but then they're not fodder. They are rubbish. You see, I am thoroughly practical with regard to nature. I look at it with the eye of a landowner, and that black spleen-wort don't benefit anyone but a herb-doctor."

I see more and more that my first judgment was hasty. Mr. Newton is clever, though he has rosy cheeks. I suppose he is what is called practical, and I believepractical people are always right.

We have come in sight of another gate.

"Here we are," he says, as he holds it open. "When we have climbed to the top of this field you will look down into the Cleave; but you had better rest, had you not? Rather a bore this climbing, isn't it?"

The climb looks formidable. The field is really the side of a hill, or of a very lofty embankment, and it is so encumbered with blocks of granite of every size and form,



that one might fancy the huge masses of rock which crowned its summit had been smitten in some great convulsion of nature, and had scattered these fragments broadcast. Patches of grass assert themselves at intervals, and on this some sheep are feeding; a lark is singing overhead, and a couple of yellow birds hop from one stone to another, and look at us with their little inquisitive heads on one side.

I sit down on the stone to which Mr. Newton points, but I wish he would leave off his agricultural explanations. I want to be quite silent, and feast my eyes on the scene below us. We have climbed high enough to overlook Merdon, nestling round its church-tower amid the sheltering trees, and I can trace the windings of the little brook, circling like a silver fringe at the feet of the quaintly-shaped hills that rise, many-coloured, behind the village. I see newly-ploughed earth beside the yellowish-green of fading vegetables, and,

shouldering these, comes an abrupt stretch of purple moor, with a huge grey rock for centre.

But quiet and solitude are hopeless, for Mr. Newton is still holding forth, and I see Madame La Peyre and Mr. Donald coming through the gate towards us. am very capricious. Five minutes ago, though his talk rather disturbed me, I liked Mr. Newton well enough as a companion, but now I hail the coming interruption with delight, and I dart off to tell some of my delight to Madame La Peyre. My foot slips, and I lose my balance. hear a shout, and then a scream, and then the ground goes upside down, and I am aware of a concussion; and then I am raised, tenderly but strongly, and I open my eyes and see Mr. Donald's face close to mine.

"Oh, my darling child!" says Madame La Peyre. "Let me find where she is hurt, Mr. Donald." But Mr. Donald seems to put Madame La Peyre gently aside.

"I think I had better carry her home at once, Madame. I am sure there ought to be no delay."

I am beginning to feel a sharp pain in my wrist, and I am sore all over; but Mr. Donald's alarm amuses me.

"Oh no, I can walk well enough, thank you," I say, with a laugh. "I am not near dying yet."

I watch his face, and he looks very grave. He gives me his arm, and I begin to walk. But I feel so unsteady, and my head swims so, that I catch desperately at his arm with my unhurt hand, and cling to him.

"I fear you must carry her. I fear she is very much hurt," says Madame, very sadly, "but she is too heavy for you."

I suppose Mr. Newton has just come down to us.

"Of course she is," he says. "Let me carry Miss Stewart, Donald. I am ever so much stronger than you are."

Mr. Donald does not seem to hear his pupil. He raises me from the ground. I catch a glimpse of Mr. Newton looking absolutely savage, and in spite of my pain I laugh. It is so amusing to see his face.

"I think I feel safest with Mr. Donald, thank you," I say; "he is taller."

It is not very comfortable anyway, and I wish it was over. I am delighted when Madame La Peyre tells Mr. Newton to hurry on for Mrs. Dayrell's garden-chair.

"It would be no use in the lane," she says, "but the path through the wood is smoother."

I am sure I am very heavy, for I can feel how hard Mr. Donald breathes as we get near the end of the lane. Madame La Peyre persuades him to rest against the gate, but he soon goes on again.

"Here comes Mr. Newton," says Madame, when we are half way along the wood path.

"The chair is at the gate," he says, breathlessly. I believe he must have fractured that poor chair, in dragging it along so fast. "It is too wide to pass through the gate," he gasps. "Now, Donald, you're as white as a sheet; let me carry Miss Stewart a little."

"I think I can walk now, if you will let me lean on your arm." I say this to Mr. Donald; it is horrible to think that he is so exhausted, and yet I cannot let that little red-cheeked Mr. Newton touch me we might both go down together. "Put me down," I say decidedly.

I am so sore and stiff that I can hardly keep in a scream as my feet touch the ground; my head still feels light and confused, but I have no longer that swimming faintness.

I look up gratefully at Mr. Donald; he is not pale now—he has flushed up to his temples.

"Thank you very, very much," I whis-

per; and I press my hand gratefully on his arm.

"Do not be afraid of tiring me; you must lean on me more heavily than that," he says.

Why are some men awkward who yet do not look amiss, and others, who seem ungainly, are so tender and skilful in all they do to help? Mr. Newton walks excellently, and I have no doubt he is a good dancer, and adroit in manly exercises, while Mr. Donald is, by comparison, shambling and knock-kneed; and yet how carefully and easily he has moved me to-day! When we reach the chair he bends forward to unfasten the apron, and Mr. Newton comes close beside me.

"Let me help you in," he says, in an aggrieved voice; "you won't let me do anything."

He takes the hand which all this time has been hanging by my side. I did not

want Madame La Peyre to know that it was hurt.

Mr. Newton's grasp is like a knife-cut. I give a sudden shriek, and fall almost fainting against Madame La Peyre. There is a hubbub of inquiry, and then I open my eyes and laugh.

"Oh I'm so sorry—it was the pain."

I mean to look pleasantly at Mr. Newton, but the mixture of dismay and anger in his face is so ludicrous, that I laugh without any power to check myself. At last I find my voice, and see that he has grown crimson.

"I beg your pardon for laughing; but I believe this wrist is sprained."

CHAPTER XX.

A WARNING!

Mrs. Dayrell's doctor had to be consulted, and I was also so bruised and shaken that I was obliged to content myself with being drawn about in Mrs. Dayrell's chair whenever I wanted to go beyond the village. It seemed as if I was doomed not to explore the Cleave. Mr. Donald and Mr. Newton were very kind, but after the first day they came separately. I like them both, and I look forward to their visits, and so, I think, does Madame La Peyre. She talks to them in such pretty

English. I believe I like Mr. Donald the best. I am always grateful to him for having taken the trouble to carry me home, although it was so very uncomfortable. And he is so kind; he brings me books and reads poetry to me, but sometimes, when I look up suddenly, he is staring at me with such a sentimental look that I nearly laugh, and I believe, if I did laugh at him, he would be hurt. Mr. Newton does not bring books, but he makes me laugh; he is commonplace, but he has all sorts of amusing stories about the village people. I must go and see some of the villagers when I am able to get about freely again. longing for this; I feel sure there is a letter for me from Eugène lying at the postoffice.

I have seen Mrs. Dayrell once or twice, but she depresses me; she looks so sad, and her manner is so imperious. Angélique has just come to summon me to her.

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Madame La Peyre looks up from her embroidery.

"Do not stay long, Gertrude; talking makes Barbara cough."

I have remarked that Madame never proposes that I should go to her sister-in-law, and that she seems unwilling that I should go at all. But first, I am contradictory; and next, this house is very dull when one has to stay in it so much, especially when one is longing for a letter; any change is a boon. I could not exist without Mr. Donald and Frank Newton—he has told me his name is Frank—and on the days between their visits I get restless.

"I will not make her cough, and I will be very discreet;" and then, to make amends for a secret delight I take in teasing Madame La Peyre about her invalid, I go and kiss her and hug her till she cries out I am spoiling her cap.

"Au revoir." I kiss my hand to her, and skip after Angélique.

"Angélique," I say, following her upstairs, "you are a hard-hearted woman, after all, I see."

Angélique does not look round, but I can catch her grave, peculiar smile; her eyes smile as well as her lips, so that, though the smile is grave, it lights up her whole face.

"Why does Mademoiselle say I have a so hard heart?"

She asks this so meekly, with such a perfect acceptation of my accusation, that I am ashamed. I go close to her, and pinch her close-fitting black sleeve.

"I mean that you don't care really for me. When my wrist was so bad, you were as good and tender as you could be. Why, you sat up with me all that first night, keeping the bandage wet, and I thought you a dear old thing, and now you take no more notice of me than you do of the pigs in the yard."

We have reached the landing. Angé-

lique pauses before Mrs. Dayrell's door, and looks at me gravely.

"Of what service could my notice be to Mademoiselle?"

"Don't be so pragmatical, Angélique. Ah! I see you do not understand that word. I mean that one does not care for things only for use, one likes them for pleasure too, and it is my pleasure in life to make every creature love me."

Angélique's smile fades away; she looks unutterably sad.

"That is the most dangerous of pleasures;" and then, as if it were a part of her phrase, she goes on, "Mademoiselle will only stay a so little time with Madame;" she nods towards the door. "Madame has been awake this night, and she should repose."

She knocks, and I enter as soon as I hear Mrs. Dayrell's voice. How sharp and querulous it sounds after Angélique's quiet words.

It is not a very warm day; the leaves

blow about in a September gale, and grey masses of cloud drift away from one hill to another like Noah's dove; but Mrs. Dayrell's window is open, and her face has the same deep flush that I noticed on that hot August morning when I first saw her.

"I thought you were never coming again, Gertrude; you need not stay, my mother."

Mrs. Dayrell is always more civil to Angélique than to anyone; there seems to be some link between them; she usually calls her "my mother."

I have lost my awe of this strange, wild-looking woman.

I shake hands with her; she never offers to kiss me, and then she points to a low chair opposite her sofa.

"Sit there to-day, child. I want to watch your face; it is like a landscape in April, where one can see the clouds and the sunshine without looking skywards."

I feel myself blush.

"Why do you say such uncomfortable things? How can I be natural if you make me think how I am looking."

Mrs. Dayrell laughs.

Her laugh is like her voice, so hard and solitary; it seems to be entirely for her own enjoyment; there is no invitation in it to others to share her amusement.

"You are so amusing, child, that you ought to come to me every day; but you really must learn to control your face, you are now pouting violently."

I jump up and go to the window; it is impossible to sit still and be examined as if I were a stuffed bird. All at once I lean forward and look beyond the garden. Mr. Newton is crossing the brook; he has a gun, and two dogs are following him in the most orderly fashion.

"Who is that?" says the sharp voice. "Your shoulders tell me you see some one, child."

"Only Mr. Newton." I speak without turning round.

"I asked for you yesterday, child, and then I heard that you were reading poetry with Mr. Donald. To-day you are staring after Mr. Newton, and you are a little past sixteen, Gertrude, and sometimes you look twenty. What is my sister about?"

I feel that Mrs. Dayrell ought not to talk in this way to me, it is so unlike my mother, or even Madame La Peyre; and yet she fascinates me. I so long for a talk on the forbidden topic, love. My recent readings with Mr. Donald have much increased this longing. We have been reading Tennyson. Yesterday he read to me "The Miller's Daughter," and he brought me a volume of Coleridge—for the sake of "The Ancient Mariner," he said; but I found something in the book I liked much better than that hobgoblin story, a little poem called "Love." After all, if my mother had lived

she would probably now let me talk about love. It seems to me that it is a woman's real existence if she thinks. What used I to think about till I knew Eugène? Nothing! Now I long to go and ask for his letter at once.

"Why are you so silent?" Mrs. Dayrell is getting vexed. "I did not send for you that I might look at all those plaits of hair. Come and sit down, and be glad that you can move your limbs, and are not condemned to lie on this wretched sofa. Well, now, which do you prefer—Mr. Newton or the tutor?"

She puts up both her thin hands, and strains her hair off her face, till her eyes look larger than ever. I have no pleasure in looking at her—she is so fevered and hectic. She gazes at me so searchingly that I smile.

"I don't know. Mr. Newton amuses me, and Mr. Donald interests me."

She looks inquiringly at this.

"Interests you, does he? I did not think there was anyone interesting in Merdon. Madame La Peyre should bring Mr. Donald to see me. Bah! I forget; at your age everyone interested me. Ah! my dear little simpleton, enjoy life while you can."

"You are always saying things of that kind." I speak pettishly. I do not like to be called a simpleton. "I may be foolish, but other people take an interest in life besides me. There is Madame La Peyre, no one could be gayer, and Angélique never looks sad."

Mrs. Dayrell tosses back her hair impatiently. I notice how the blue veins show on her temples.

"It is easy to a bird or a butterfly to be gay," she says, "but you have a deeper nature than Madame La Peyre has, and I warn you to enjoy life while you can, and while even a tutor can interest you; but tell me how Mr. Donald interests you, child?"

Something in her look—I cannot even

now tell what it was—brings the blood flying to my face.

"Oh, I don't know; he brings me books, and we read together."

"Poetry or prose?"

"Poetry;" and then I feel mischievous; her fixed inquiring gaze provokes me. "Do you know a little poem about Géneviève, called 'Love?' I read that yesterday."

I suppose Mrs. Dayrell is too clever to be deceived.

"You may read what you like with Mr. Donald, child. But now listen to me; don't read poetry; and if you want to enjoy life, and to be gay and bright as long as possible, you should not read about love, Gertrude—do not even think of it."

"What harm can thinking do"—I break out angrily, my face on fire—" if there is no one to fall in love with?"

Mrs. Dayrell raises herself a little. She looks at me curiously.

"She is not such a child, after all;" and



then she falls back on her pillows, and lies quiet.

I feel so angry when Mrs. Dayrell speaks of me as if I were a bit of wood, that I am inclined to leave her by herself.

"You may soon be in love with a creature of your own making," she says, presently, "if you go on reading love-poems and encouraging sentiment. Leave yourselfalone, child; women have too much feeling, without putting themselves into a forcing-house. Have as many admirers as you please, Gertrude—you will never be in want of them while you keep that face and figure—but beware of loving one among them, if you mean to enjoy life."

I shrink from this talk, and yet it fascinates me.

"But do you then agree with Madame La Peyre, that one should not love one's husband before marriage?"

"Nor after, either, if you care to be happy." Her face grows stern, and her



voice more and more imperious. "Did you not hear me say that women have too much feeling? Don't look unbelieving, you foolish, headstrong child! I am not talking theory; I am no sentimental spinster preaching doctrine she has not tried; I have been through the fire. Do you want to know what happens, Gertrude, to a woman who loves her husband?"

I am greatly interested, and yet thoroughly prejudiced; I do not believe Mrs. Dayrell has ever really loved anyone, she is so bitter in look and tone.

"If a woman loves"—her lips smile at my rebellious face—"she always spoils the man she loves, and makes him a tyrant. A husband soon tires of a wife's love, Gertrude, but he will not give it up so easily; it must remain his, however little store he may set by it, and he resents most unjustly and tyrannically any pleasure she may take in any other admiration."

"I should think so," I exclaim; "what

right has a wife to any admiration but her husband's?"

I spoke heartily. This was the creed I had been taught in my home. I felt as if Mrs. Dayrell were wicked to say such things, and I imagine my eyes told her so.

She blushes over face and throat, even her wasted hands tremble with agitation; but she laughs still, and there is the mock in her voice which so pains and alienates me.

"You have true bread-and-butter ideas, Gertrude, and very good for you so long as you had a mother to keep the bandage over your eyes; but it has been torn away. Life must be more true and real to you than it is to most girls of sixteen. I tell you, child, you have in you a power of deep passionate love; your only hope of happiness lies in not yielding to it."

"Why?" The strength and fervour of her words move me strangely, but I try to be indifferent in my manner. "Everything teaches that love is true happiness; so it seems to me I have an extra chance. I have only to take care that I love where I am loved."

She shakes her head.

"You may go now; either you cannot or you will not understand that feeling is a source of misery, not happiness. Be as changeable, as inconstant as you choose, that will give you endless amusement, and will help to deaden feeling; but be warned, child, whatever else you may do, never marry for love."

She closes her eyes as if she is weary. I wait a little, and then I go away.

I did not want to meet Angélique, to incur a rebuke for staying so much longer than usual with Mrs. Dayrell. Nor did I wish to see Madame La Peyre. I was so full of new thoughts that I must get away where I could think them out quietly without interruption. I went to my

room, got my hat and a book, and then left the house. I forgot my hoped-for letter. I determined to find my own way to the Cleave.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

